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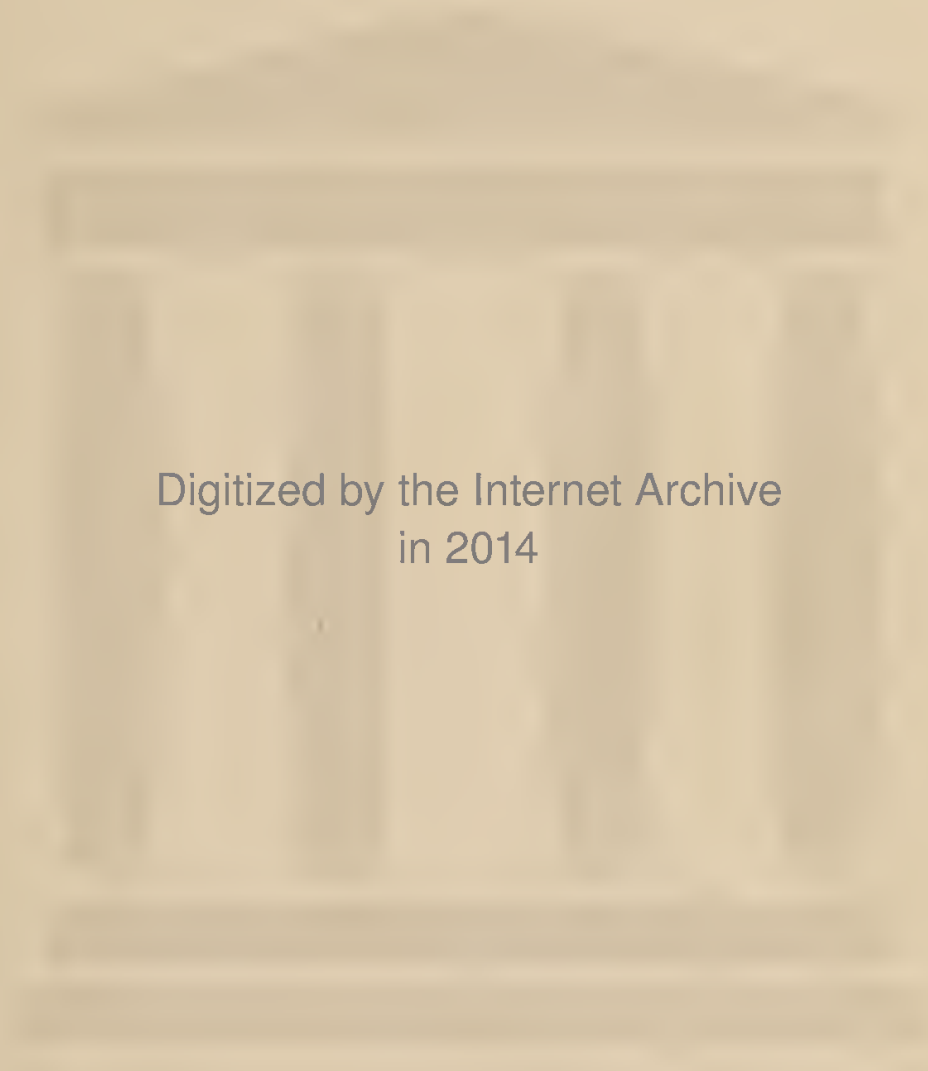

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WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND

EDGAR DEWITT JONES, D.D.

WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND

Studies, Expositions and Meditations
In The Life of the Spirit

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BY

EDGAR DEWITT JONES, D.D.

MINISTER OF CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH, DETROIT

Author of "The Inner Circle," "The Wisdom of God's Fools," "Fairhope," etc.

WITH AN APPRECIATION BY

DR. CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON

EDITOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY"

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND. I

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

THE MEMBERS AND OFFICE-BEARERS

OF

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

WHERE FOR FOURTEEN YEARS THE AUTHOR
ENJOYED THE HIGH PRIVILEGE OF A FREE PULPIT

AND TO OTHER FRIENDS AND FELLOW-WORKERS
OF THAT COMMUNITY

THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS
IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

EDGAR DEWITT JONES

An Appreciation by

CHARLES CLAYTON MORRISON

EDITOR OF *The Christian Century*

Those who know Edgar DeWitt Jones, the man, will keep wishing that all who share with them the inspiration of these published sermons might have in mind the image of the preacher himself. Lucid and heartening as this printed preaching is, it requires the personal presence of the preacher to give it its full power. Such a remark I well know is a commonplace, and it passes usually as a truism. But it is not always true. Preachers there are a-plenty whose written word is discounted by their personalities, just as Paul's opponents declared that his letters were weighty and telling, but his personality weak and his delivery beneath contempt. We know that in Paul's case this was simply the talk of his enemies, for the results of the personal labors of the great apostle are not open to dispute and the tone of voice in which he defies his opponents in the later chapters of his Second Corinthian letter discloses a sense of personal power which a man could hardly have gained save by its successful exercise under many crucial tests.

Yet, however it may have been with Paul, whether his outer personality put his great soul at a disadvan-

tage as compared to the power expressed in his written message, the fact remains that the severest test to which the personality of a minister can be put is not in preaching to his people but in simply living among them. To be sure, his preaching is a part of his living, but his living is more, far more, than his preaching. No man in the community is subjected to such a searching of the foundations and hidden recesses of his character as is the minister. He stands in the spotlight of public attention, not alone when he stands in the pulpit, but in his daily walk and conversation. He has far less privacy than any other man. The margin of his deportment in which he may be indifferent to the opinion of others is narrower than in the case of any of his neighbors. Unless his public message is reinforced by a personality of depth and grace, his message suffers great discount. No matter how brilliant a success a minister may achieve in the pulpit, his success will lack substance and foundation if his people have to speak apologetically of the private side of his life. But if his people see in him the embodiment of those elements of personal dignity and strength which command their respect and win their affection, he becomes one more demonstration of the soundness of that tradition which places the Christian ministry preeminent among all professions and vocations.

All this is background for saying that in the preaching of Edgar DeWitt Jones the central secret is the preacher himself. Readers of these sermons who do not personally know Dr. Jones will find here grace and charm of expression, vitality of conviction, and unusual skill in homiletical craftsmanship. It is to be

hoped that even such readers may be led by the qualities of the sermons to draw a vague mental picture of the preacher himself, and if so, they are sure to feel in some subtle fashion the outflow of his personal power. But those readers who have sat under the ministry of Dr. Jones, or who have come into any degree of friendly relationship with him, will approach these chapters in quite a different mood. For them his published sermon will not be just a deliverance: it will be a revelation—a self-revelation of the ideals and convictions of a personality that has already arrested their interest and won their love. The sermon will not be merely a piece of writing to be judged by its intrinsic argument or beauty; but a human document, a letter from a friend whose utterances we hold as true not so much because he *proves* them as because *he* says them.

I well remember my first personal contact with Dr. Jones. It was nearly a score of years ago. The occasion was a gathering of ministers at which Dr. Jones read a paper. He made upon me the impression of a singularly courtly and gentle spirit. His unusually prepossessing countenance and physique, his urbanity, his graceful speech, his genuine consideration of the feelings and opinions of others created in me the sense that here was a man of rare inward moral dignity. But from my detached point of view at the time I could not help wondering whether the qualities which charmed us all might not represent his public reaction to high professional ideals more than the inherent character of his private self. He was away from home at the time! And the skeptic in me suggested that

perhaps in the routine of daily living, among people to whom his affairs were an open book, he would be found acting in the commonplace rôle of the rest of us, as compared to that in which he had exhibited himself in our formal meeting and friendly intercourse.

Since that first meeting I have seen him in all sorts of situations. I have seen him in the routine of his parish, with his neighbors, his churchfolk, his family, and in the seclusion of his study, and I am bound to say that I have never seen him in an ungraceful rôle. The chivalrous manner, the gentle, considerate address, the deft use of literary lore, the habit of carefully formulating his ideas, the elegance and restraint of his phrasing, all these I have found through many years of a friendship based upon the most intimate contacts to be part of the very grain of this rare minister's nature. I have seen him at play, I have seen him bearing the burden of great personal sorrow, I have seen him angry with a godly wrath, but I have never seen him in a weak or ungraceful posture. I shall always remember the impression he made upon me once when protesting against a flagrant injustice. He voiced his emotion in measured words the last of which proved to my surprise to be a word not wholly disallowable by the Christian laity, if confined to the proper occasion, but which one does not expect a minister to pronounce. There was a certain majesty about his explosion. One felt the very rafters of the universe shake. Yet the protest was spoken gently, quietly, without the slightest loss of poise of soul. I think that episode gave me a new sounding of the deeps of my friend's personality. I felt his

self-control, his moral power, his leonine vigor as I had never had occasion to do before. Once I called on him when he was suffering the intense pain of illness. I could myself hardly endure the sight of his anguish. But with grim humor he reminded me between paroxysms that Ian Maclaren had died of the thing that was the matter with him! His fineness is instinctive. Graciousness is either native to him or the gift of Christ in a thorough-going conversion. He does not merely contemplate truth and beauty and strength, and admire them as external objects; they are part of himself, organic with his personality. When such a man preaches, therefore, he speaks more than words—his words are in very truth spirit and life.

It is as a conversationalist that I could wish all readers of his sermons might know him, as well as a pulpiteer. I know of no man who combines more winsomely the ingredients of small talk, casual, spontaneous humor, and lofty and earnest discourse in conversation than Dr. Jones. An evening with him leaves one's mind dripping with the juices of literature, of current events, of whimsical anecdote—the juices, too, of one's own best ideas! For he is not that kind of conversationalist who does all the conversing. He makes conversation a game of tennis and you are on your mettle to return the ball. Moreover he plays the game so as to stimulate your best thinking, not to overwhelm you by his own. So he always lets you go with a certain inner feeling of satisfaction with yourself, not only that you got so much from him, but that you contributed to the conversation so much yourself, and did it so well!

As a preacher, face to face with a congregation, Dr. Jones impresses you as putting his object above his subject. He has practical ends in view. He wants this sermon to accomplish some specific thing. It is not on the level of mere institutional interest that his object lies—far from that—but in the realm of human life. He really wants to bring consolation to the bereaved, courage to the wavering, hope to those whose heart is the home of shame. I imagine that he always visualizes some particular mother or youth or business man, some particular sinner or mourner or butterfly of fashion, when he speaks to classes of them. His subject is conscientiously wrought out, but his object dominates his mind both in the preparation and delivery of his sermon. This gives point and concreteness to his message which much thoughtful preaching lacks.

In his intellectual interests Dr. Jones is one of the most modern of the moderns. He is an omnivorous reader. He puts his friends to shame by the wide range of his knowledge of contemporary literature, both magazine and book. But he keeps up the old tradition of literary taste. Throughout the war when everybody's ears were so dinned with the noise of urgent current events that they lost interest in anything that anybody ever said before 1914, this man would pass from his morning review of the relative positions of the armies at the front to a re-reading of Boswell or Pepys! He kept his perspective. He could not abandon the old books, because they had become his friends. He had not simply studied them, he had communed with them, and he has cherished them through these

years of truculent contemporaneity with a devotion second only to that which he has given his friendships in the flesh. I do not think the range and depth of Dr. Jones' intellectual interests are in any adequate degree indicated in this volume of his sermons, inspiring and rich with suggestion as I am sure every reader will find the book to be. His social convictions are only suggested here, and I know that these convictions are well seasoned and deep set in his soul. He has had many a battle with himself to preach this social gospel in which he truly believes. Pastor for many years of many men of wealth who rejoiced in the "comfortable" evangelical burden of his ministry, he has faced the possibility of alienation of friendships and serious disturbance of the congregational life, should he adopt a harsh presentation of these social demands of Jesus which our generation feels must be applied to large areas of life unincluded by previous generations within the scope of Christian ethics. And I know of nothing in which the pastor-heart has so justified its impulses as in the way in which it has guided the pulpit voice of this particular pastor in his utterance of the social gospel. By instruction most deft and delicate, the social obligation has been interpreted in a way that has altogether won many, and those whom it has not fully won are left with an inner divine discontent which is peculiarly salutary.

It is this shepherd instinct that, after all, is the greatest quality in Edgar DeWitt Jones. He loves people. He believes in them. He invests even the unworthiest of them with dignity. And in the spirit of Jesus he delights to serve them. He is a real pastor.

He knows little children by name, and they cling to him. His footsteps are acquainted with all the levels upon which human life holds intercourse. He meets the man of affairs at his club without constraint, and he talks to the dear nobody with gentle sincerity and without patronage. The best thing I can say about him is that I should like him to be my own pastor. I should like to have him as a counsellor in the things of the spirit. Just to know that he knew my troubles would help me bear them, quite aside from any prescription he might offer. And when my faith was baffled, as alas, it often is, I think I should find my feet again, partly by the wisdom of his instruction, but more because he would lead me by the attractions of his fine spirit to the rock upon which his own faith seems so secure.

C. C. M.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE TOWEL AND THE BASIN . . . . . Study of an Unconventional Portrait of Jesus.	13
II	WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND . . . The "Scarlet Letter" in Our Lord's Time.	29
III	THE CHAPTER OF CHAPTERS . . . . . A Summit View from the Mont Blanc of the Holy Scriptures.	43
IV	THREE TIMES A DAY . . . . . A Plea for Fixed Seasons of Private Devotions.	57
V	A GOD WHO WILL NOT LET US GO . . . . Some Reflections on the Marvel of the Divine Pursuit	69
VI	THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH . . . . . How God Schools His Prophets and Provides for Their Successors	81
VII	HABAKKUK'S HYMN . . . . . A Meditation on the Winged Words of an Old Testament Saint	95
VIII	THE LADDER OF PRAYER . . . . . An Elementary Lesson in the Greatest of Schools	105
IX	THE HIGHER SPIRITUALISM . . . . . The Deeper Truth Underlying the Vagaries of Spiritualistic Experiments	119
X	GOD MEASURING THE CHURCHES . . . . How the Divine Spirit Appraises a Christian Congregation	135

CHAPTER		PAGE
XI	THE CHURCH IN THY HOUSE . . . . . A Brief for the Family Altar	147
XII	THE LORD'S LEADING . . . . . A Meditation on a Memorable Hymn	159
XIII	THE PEACE CHRIST GIVES . . . . . Why Jesus' Peace Differs from the World's Peace	173
XIV	OTHER SHEEP . . . . . How the Good Shepherd Regards the Scattered Flock of God	185
XV	WHEN DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP . . . . A Never-To-Be-Forgotten Day in the Lives of Four Fishermen	199
XVI	WHAT AND WHERE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? . . The Ministry of the Comforter or "God in Action"	211
XVII	THE CHRISTMAS LYRIC . . . . . A Hymn of the Nativity Set to Music by the Holy Spirit.	223

I

THE ORDER OF THE TOWEL AND BASIN

Study of an Unconventional Portrait of Jesus

John 13:1-4.

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel, and girded himself.

WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND

I

THE TOWEL AND THE BASIN

Some years ago a distinguished American educator was the guest of a group of Chinese pastors and teachers in an interior town of that young Republic. In the course of the conversation he was amazed to discover how familiar his hosts were with the Gospel narrative. Nothing seemed to have escaped their scrutiny, and their knowledge of the details of Jesus' life fairly startled the American. Something prompted him to ask them this question: "What incident in the life of Jesus impressed you most?"

Now this is a question of more than ordinary significance. It is a question that a group of English or American pastors and teachers might ponder with profit. It is a question that students of the Gospels for many years, and those familiar with the New Testament for a life time, ought to weigh carefully before answering. It is not a question to be answered offhand or glibly; it warrants a fresh study of the records and possibly extended reflection. Moreover

by our answer to this query it is possible, at least partially, to appraise us spiritually.

The Chinese Christians thoughtfully considered the American's question. After a long pause,—so long that it became embarrassing,—the oldest of the group replied: "His washing of his disciples' feet." A consensus of opinion showed that the other Chinamen were in agreement with this answer. That this particular incident should have impressed the Oriental mind above any of the miracles of Jesus is, to say the least, interesting. That a great teacher should take the place of a slave and perform a menial service seemed more wonderful to that company of new converts to Christianity than Jesus' stilling of the storms on Galilee, his healing of the Gerasene demoniac, or his calling Lazarus back to life.

Portraits with our Lord as subject are numerous in the renowned galleries of the world. In Florence, alone, there are more than fifteen hundred paintings with Jesus as theme. The wondrous tints of Del Sarto, the rich coloring of Titian, the witchery of Raphael's skill, the exquisite miniatures of Fra Angelico have helped to fix forever in the minds of the people those mountain peaks of our Lord's career: the Nativity, the Temptation, the Transfiguration and the Crucifixion. It is difficult to think of Jesus in art except in these crises and epochal experiences of His ministry. One could wish, however, that a more unconventional portrait of Jesus were known in every land where the sun shines—I mean this portrait of Jesus washing His disciples' feet.

In the Church of the Divine Paternity, New York,

where the gifted J. Fort Newton preaches, there is such a picture done in mosaic and placed above the communion table in the Chancel. On the left is the figure of John in an attitude of devotion, in the background Andrew and James the son of Zebedee. Bartholomew and Philip are seated at the table. Thaddeus and Matthew are standing. Thomas and Judas seated. Judas is placed in the foreground balancing Philip on the left. In the center Christ is shown in the act of washing the feet of Simon Peter. The coloring scheme is so arranged as to throw the central figures in the light with darker and richer shades on the extreme edges. It is a beautiful and impressive picture, and the more so because it is an unconventional portrait of Jesus, one that shows Him in the humblest of ministries. In fancy we may gaze upon this rich mosaic as we reflect upon the meaning of the deed it commemorates.

I

It was a daring act of Jesus, this washing of His disciples' feet. It was unexpected and altogether contrary to the rank of a teacher or seer. A menial service such as this was the duty of a slave, and in the absence of a servant from the upper room each of the disciples should have performed the act for the other. But the minds of the twelve were far removed from so lowly a ministration; therefore Jesus took the towel and the basin and began to bathe the dusty feet of one of the twelve. It is difficult to imagine any other teacher of Jesus' day at this servant's task. By no leap of fancy can one think of the great Gamaliel engaged in so lowly an occupation. It was a bold and daring act on the

part of Jesus, and in perfect keeping with the venturesomeness that characterized His ministry for mankind. It was this quality—fearlessness to over-ride tradition and willingness to plough straight across class distinction in order to serve humanity—that signalized the ministry of our Lord. He dined freely at the homes of notorious sinners, and the despised Publicans were His friends. The fact that the woman of Sychar had "a past" did not deter Him from engaging her in conversation; if anything, it increased His desire to help her find "the way home." It was this quality of courage to brave custom and challenge traditions that made the early church so unconquerably persistent. Those early disciples of Jesus hazarded everything for the sake of a great cause. They jeopardized comfort, position, family ties, even life itself, with magnificent abandon. "Safety last" was the motto of the men and women who established the Brotherhood of Christ in a thousand fields where darkness reigned. Modern Christianity sorely needs this venturesomeness; this dauntless spirit that laughs at difficulties; balks at nothing; welcomes opposition; and marches straight into peril unafraid. In truth, there can be no real missionary passion without this divine recklessness as to what happens to oneself. There is no place where a Christian cannot go when his purpose is good and the occasion warrants his going.

There is a widely known and successful minister in Baltimore, a Virginian by birth, who is the most courteous and delightful of men. There is something almost womanly in his gentle ways and kindly address. But withal there is a daringness in his faith and a cer-

tain boldness of spirit. In witness of this, an incident of his ministry is recalled. For several Sundays in succession this able preacher had observed a stranger in his audience and one who seemed to be greatly interested in the service. He made several attempts to see this stranger at the close of the service, but unsuccessfully. No sooner was the benediction pronounced than the man hurried out of the church. After a good deal of difficulty he discovered that this man was the proprietor of a drinking place and also his place of business. One afternoon the minister passed through the swinging doors of the saloon and, seeing the owner behind the bar, he went over to him and shook hands with him. The man was much confused and greatly embarrassed. "I am glad to see you, Dr. A———but not in *this* place. I would like to have you come to see me at my home." "My friend," replied the minister, "if this place is good enough for you to do business in, it is good enough for me to come to see you in." This was unanswerable, so the proprietor removed his white apron, came from behind the bar, and with his guest sat down at one of the tables in the midst of men who were drinking, laughing, and telling ribald stories. From that visit and conversation there came about the conversion of that man to the Christian faith, his giving up the liquor business, and the consequent regeneration of his life. Oh, for a daring ministry, a dauntless discipleship of Jesus, an unbeatable Church!

Yes, when Jesus took the towel and the basin and proceeded to wash the feet of His disciples there was daring and audacity in the act. Christianity can never

amount to much in any community where its adherents are slow to go into the midst of sin and misery, fearful lest thereby they lose their religion. Those who possess that spirit have little religion to lose and certainly none to impart. The great sore spots of the world cannot be cured by absent treatment. The last time that General William Booth visited America, he told how he came to organize the Salvation Army. He went over on the east side of London and there he saw the vice, the crime, and the suffering of the people. "I hungered for hell," he said; "for days I stood in the seething streets, drinking it in and loving it all. Yes, I loved the souls that made up the muddy stream." That phrase "hungering for hell" is drastic, but not too drastic. It is better to "hunger for hell" in the sense that Booth used the term than it is to "hunger for heaven" in that selfish sense of desiring to attain unto bliss, and in so doing abandon the sin-cursed multitudes to their fate.

II

Jesus washed His disciples' feet and in that act He rebuked their selfish neglect and unlovely controversy far more effectively than the most scathing words could have done. Canon Farrar thinks that as the disciples were seating themselves at the table the controversy arose over the seat of honor which each wanted for himself. This may have been the case. It is in Luke 22:24–30 where we learn that the discussion took the form of an argument as to who should be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Luke says there was a "contention" among them. Thus in the disciples' contention for place, rank, power, and authority, the

humble preparation for the meal—the washing of their travel-stained feet—was ignored or forgotten. Besides, such was a servant's task, and not one of the twelve was minded to take the towel and the basin and do this lowly service, each for the other. Jesus took in the situation at a glance. He saw the mood of the disciples; the contention had inflamed them. They were angry and filled with pride, and possibly envy. They were thinking of scepters, of thrones, and crowns; they were high-minded and haughty of heart. He might have rebuked them sternly, even sarcastically, if indeed our Lord ever spoke on that wise. But He said not a word. Instead He took a towel, twisted it about his waist like a girdle; then a basin, poured water in it, and kneeling down began to wash the feet of a guest. Those who saw the "Passion Play" in 1910 will never forget the exceeding great tenderness of the scene when Anton Lang, as Jesus, knelt at the feet of Johan Zwink, who impersonated Judas Iscariot, and began to wash his feet. It was more memorable than the famous trial or crucifixion scenes. It moved the spectators to tears.

> Christ washed the feet of Judas!
> And thus a girded servant, self-abased,
> Taught that no wrong this side the gate of heaven
> Was e'er too great to wholly be effaced
> And thus unasked, in spirit be forgiven.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; He took a towel, and girded Himself." Here is a new idea of Godlikeness, a new conception

of Divinity. And that the only begotten of the Father should thus take upon himself the service of a menial, and with such winsomeness withal, is too wonderful for us to comprehend. And yet, since God is Love how could it be otherwise.

In that act of washing the disciples' feet Jesus washed more than the soil from off their flesh. What He did to their hearts was greater than what He did for their bodies. By that act He washed away envy and sordid ambition, jealousy and foolish pride, from the hearts of the eleven. Even Judas could never be the same man again after the Master had thus washed his feet. Who knows how closely related was Judas' recollection of this ineffable act and his flinging the blood money at the feet of the priests crying: "I have sinned in that I have shed innocent blood." Love is never so powerful as when it glows in acts, when it pulsates deeds. Example is as much better than precept as is character than ceremony. Men have a habit of forgetting what we say in supreme moments but they never forget what we do in hour of crisis. What is there so great and so melting as sacrificial love? To what unexpected ends and to what renunciations will such love go.

I recall an incident, an unconventional episode, one too in which a minister was the central figure, a man justly famed for his singularly upright and beautiful life; the most fully orbed minister of Christ's Gospel it has been my good fortune to know. This man has a dislike for tobacco that amounts almost to antipathy. He deplores its use in any form and particularly abhors a pipe. It came about that his only son early took to

smoking and by a strange irony he chanced to prefer a pipe most of all. The great-hearted father was pained and disappointed, but he took, as was his wont, the larger view, going so far as to tell the youth that if he was determined to smoke it was unnecessary for him to go away from the house to indulge the habit. Some months later, possibly a year, this minister consulted his daughter, who was also the keeper of his home, as to what practical Christmas gift she thought he should purchase for her brother, something too that he would especially prize. The young woman answered immediately and definitely, "Get him a pipe, father, he needs a new one." The minister showed the surprise he felt. "But you would scarcely expect me to do that, daughter," he replied. "Father, you asked me what *practical* gift brother would appreciate, and I answered you accordingly. He certainly needs a new pipe." The father made no further reply but into his calm, strong face there came a look that only love can impart. Christmas morning in the minister's home the gifts were distributed, after the family's custom. The father handed his son a package. The lad unwrapped it, never suspecting what the gift might be. When he saw what it was he looked at his father, then at the pipe, then back again at his father, and as he saw the love light shining in those dear eyes and lighting up the strong face, the boy understood. He dropped the pipe and sprang to his father's side, threw his arms around him, and, laying his head on his father's shoulder, burst into tears! Oh, the power, the glory, the wonder of the ministry of the towel and the basin!

III

Jesus' lowly act in the upper room was a token, a sign for all who would be like Him. "A servant," He said, "is not greater than his Lord; neither one that is sent than He that sent him. I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done unto you." In so saying, Jesus did not institute an ordinance to be perpetuated by the ceremonial washing of His disciples' feet; He performed a necessary service, lowly and menial only in the eyes of those who thought so. The lesson here is that no position in life, no rank or wealth absolves a follower of Jesus from a similar service. Jesus taught by this significant incident that the giving of a cup of cold water, the assisting of a decrepit man, an aged woman, or an affrighted little child across a crowded street; a word of encouragement, a letter of comfort, counsel, or congratulation; a cheerful, happy smile, a simple "thank you" for the slightest service rendered is the privilege of us all and becomes the mighty and the famous as well as the obscure and the unknown.

I number among my friends a man who knew intimately David Swing. He has told me many things about that great preacher whose influence still lives, the most interesting being an incident of the great Chicago fire. He described for me the famous preacher in the midst of a mass of humanity, fleeing from the burning district. The refugees were carrying household articles and personal belongings of almost every description and kind—bedding, clothing, books, dishes and all sorts of odd keepsakes. A little girl had

brought her pet bird. She carried the cage with difficulty and the crowd jostled her roughly. By and by the crowd became so great and the pressure so strong that the little girl began to cry for the safety of her pet. Dr. Swing heard the sobbing, saw the child's plight, and came at once to her aid. He clasped the little girl's hand in one of his own and with the other lifted high the bird cage above the heads of the people. Thus the great preacher and the little girl went their way through the vast crowd that awful night, and the troubled heart of the child was comforted and contented.

It was after the washing of His disciples' feet that Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples if ye have love one for another." This, then, is the badge of discipleship; this symbol of the towel and basin; this manifestation of love in deed; by this sign of the towel and basin does Christianity conquer. This, my brethren of the ministry, is the order for us, not the order of the book and pen, alluring though that ministry may be; nor the order of the office and executive staff, efficient as that kind of service often is, but the order of the towel and the basin—this is the order for all who would follow Jesus Christ.

Forty years ago Bismarck said that in order to mold the nation it was necessary to mold the child. That is precisely what Germany did and with characteristic thoroughness. It is not difficult to account for the unity and solidarity of the German people.

German statesmen, schoolmasters, preachers, and parents combined to Prussianize the children of the Empire. The ideal they conspired to keep before the child in the home, school, and church is seen in this excerpt from the writings of a distinguished Prussian: "When our young children have scarce learned to fold their little hands before God, we set a picture before them; we tell them to recognize the noblest features; we tell them, 'This is our good King.' Our young men, when they are of age to bear arms, look with joy and pride on the trim garb of war and say, 'I go in the king's coat.' And when the nation assembles to a common political celebration the occasion is no feast of the constitution, no day of the Bastille, no Panathenaic festival. It is then that we bow in reverence and loyalty before him who has allowed us to see with our own eyes that for which our fathers dreamed and yearned, before him who ever extends the bounds of the kingdom in freedom, prosperity, and righteousness; before his majesty, the emperor and king."

What is it that society most needs at this hour? Surely the world is sick and civilization is stricken with a deadly malady. Numerous indeed are the remedies that are suggested. Some say a revival of conscience, of common honesty, of simple truthfulness is imperative; others clamor for a new economic order, an international comity, a world sense of social justice; still others contend that all is hopeless until there be a new evaluation of spiritual verities. But one distinguished American when asked by a friend this question, startled him with the reply that the country's greatest

need is an Emperor. Then he added, "And that Emperor's name is Jesus Christ."

Behold our Emperor! Behold Him girded with a towel, and kneeling as He washes His disciples' feet. Behold Him there in the upper room! No warlike apparel, no breast emblazoned with decorations and insignia, no sword in His hand or at His side. Behold Him the mightiest of the holy and the holiest of the mighty, teaching the supremacy of service, the holiness of ministration, the Godlikeness of love! Behold Him, believe Him, and follow Him, O members of the order of the Towel and Basin!

II

WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND

"The Scarlet Letter" in our Lord's Time. An Exposition of *John* 8:1-11

John 8:1-11.

[But Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her? And this they said, trying Him, that they might have whereof to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. But when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again He stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground. And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus lifted up Himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? Did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more.]

II

WHEN JESUS WROTE ON THE GROUND

There is a curious fact in connection with this passage of Scripture. In the Revised Version, the eleven verses together with the last verse of the preceding chapter are set off by themselves and bracketed. At the bottom of the page is a notation which reads, "Most of the ancient authorities omit John 7:53, 8:1–11. Those which contain it vary much from each other." What does this mean? It means that this particular Scripture is not a part of the original manuscript of John's Gospel. It signifies, not that the incident is unauthentic, but that it is not entitled to a place in this particular book or gospel without explanation. Even a casual student of the Scriptures will observe that the incident has little or no connection with what goes before or comes after; that it breaks in unexpectedly upon John's quiet discursive narrative. It is an interloper, so to speak, and properly belongs set off and bracketed, by itself.

The interesting question is, how does an interpolation of this kind come about. It is not an isolated instance, but one of two or three. The sixteenth chapter of Mark, from the ninth to the nineteenth verses, is of a similar character; that is, it does not belong to the original Gospel of Mark. The explanation is simple.

There is recorded in the four Gospels only a small portion of what Jesus said and did. John himself says in the last verse of his Gospel, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." This is, of course, a dramatic and emphatic way of saying that only a few of the incidents in the life of Jesus have been preserved in the sacred writings. Before these records were written down in the form that we now have them, they were committed to memory and passed on from person to person orally. It must be true in the very nature of the case that we have only fragments of Jesus' teaching, although they are sufficient for their purpose. It would not be at all surprising, however, now that the Turk has been driven out of Palestine, that excavations in the vicinity of Jerusalem should reveal additional manuscripts of sayings and events in His life, and possibly epistles of Paul.

With these facts in mind we are in a position to understand why this memorable incident is bracketed and set apart in the Revised Version of the Holy Scriptures. To summarize: it does not belong properly to John's Gospel, but the truth of the incident is not at all questioned. Indeed the episode bears upon its face the credentials of fact. It paints a portrait of Jesus, in perfect keeping with the record of His life in the Gospels, in the midst of a very unusual and trying situation.

I

The incident evidently occurred at that period in Jesus' ministry when His popularity with the masses had intensified the hatred of the Scribes and Pharisees against Him. Moreover His denunciation of many of the religious leaders of His day as "Blind guides," "Hypocrites," "Whited sepulchers," had fed their wrath to a white heat. Thus while He is teaching in the Temple the Scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman before Him, and charge her with having broken the seventh commandment. They testify against her and aver that beyond any doubt she is guilty. They cite with unction the Law of Moses, which commanded such a transgressor to be stoned, and submit the case to Jesus with the query, "What then sayest Thou of her?"

Now the purpose of this most unusual occurrence is indicated in the sixth verse, "That they might have whereof to accuse Him." They did not bring the woman to Jesus because they were deeply grieved or shocked at her conduct. They were not interested in the morals of Jerusalem particularly. They brought her that they might confuse and entrap Jesus. There is something diabolical in such a purpose, and the method the enemies of Jesus resorted to in this instance to carry it out. To come bringing this woman into the presence of Jesus with such a charge reveals a hardness of heart that is almost incredible. The wily Scribes and Pharisees tried upon numerous occasions to entrap Jesus in His talk, but in no other record of their malignant trickery is there such a vehicle employed as in this

incident. They simply took advantage of the guilt of this woman to further their own evil designs against Jesus. They reasoned that He would be disconcerted, to say the least. They believed they had Him between the horns of a dilemma, and that they had Him fast. If He said "let the woman die in accordance with the Law of Moses," they could frame an accusation against Him before Pilate, that this new King or religious teacher was actually presuming to judge cases involving life and death. If, on the other hand, He bade them to let the woman go, they could charge Him with heretical teaching, and brand Him as a traverser of the Law of Moses. We may believe that they fairly chortled in their malicious glee.

The scene was one of shameful depravity, a strange commingling of indelicacy and brazen effrontery. Behold that strange court! There is the calm and pure-hearted, clear-eyed Christ; there the company of Scribes and Pharisees, self-righteous, hating the Galilean teacher, congratulating themselves that they have caught Him at last in the snare from which He cannot escape; and there in the midst is the pitiful spectacle of the woman charged with the transgression of the Law. The poor woman shrinks from such cruel and uncalled-for public arraignment, knowing full well that her accusers have not haled her before this Teacher because they are shocked by her guilt or interested in the morals of Jerusalem. It is a most unlovely scene. No wonder few sermons are preached upon this incident, or that commentaries touch lightly upon this fragment appended to John's Gospel.

II

It is difficult to portray what must have been the feelings of Jesus, but there is a wealth of suggestion as shown by His actions that followed this unseemly act. Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. The very act is significant and is one of those little human touches which bring Jesus close to us. For instance, a friend engages you in conversation at a street corner. The talk takes a personal turn, and as you listen you draw lines or figures in the dust of the street with the toe of your shoe, your cane or umbrella. Or again, you are talking over the telephone, and the while you draw pictures or make figures on a piece of paper, or scribble on the cover of the telephone directory. This is characteristic of human nature; it is sometimes a token of emotion or confusion, oftener a mere diversion. In Jesus' case, however, it indicated something more than embarrassment and something less than confusion. The sheer coarseness of the thing, the indelicacy of the act on the part of the woman's accusers of bringing her before Him; their malignant desire to entrap Him—all this reacted upon the keen mind and pure heart of Jesus in such a way that He did not care to look upon the guilty woman, nor meet the impudent stare of her hard-hearted accusers. Therefore, He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

The accusers of the woman mistook the action of Jesus. They thought they saw in His averted face and His writing upon the ground confusion and deep embarrassment. They assumed He did not know how

to answer them. Therefore, they pressed Him the more for an answer. Alas! for them, they got an answer they little expected. Jesus lifted Himself up and said unto them, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Then He stooped down and with His finger again wrote on the ground. That was a surprise to the group of Scribes and Pharisees. They never surmised such an answer as that. Instantly each man was compelled to sit in judgment upon himself. Immediately after Jesus' answer, not only the accused but the accusers were on trial. In this connection there is a most interesting flashlight upon this entire passage of Scripture. The notation in the Revised Version informs us that this incident varies much in the various manuscripts where it is found. In one of the manuscripts there is a startling difference in the eighth verse. The sentence is made to say, "He wrote upon the ground the sins of each single one of them," and the ninth verse, "And they when they read it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest even unto the last." This gives an extra dramatic setting to Jesus' answer and the writing on the ground.

Imagine the scene according to this reading. The Pharisees bring in the woman, they make their charge. Jesus, affecting not to hear them, writes on the ground. They continue to badger Him until He looks up and says, "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Then again he stoops down and writes upon the ground. What is He writing there? The foremost Pharisee is, of course, the oldest, for according to the custom of the Orient the oldest in the company is at the front. This old Pharisee looks down

on the ground where Jesus is writing, and there he sees that Jesus has just written the record of a great sin that he has committed, and which he thinks is known to no one but himself. His conscience awakes with a flash. He turns swiftly and edges away from the crowd. Jesus has swept His hand across the ground to smooth it over and writes again. The next Pharisee reads and recognizes a hidden scene in his life, and he too, flees, and thus it goes on until all the accusers one by one, having seen written on the ground their own secret sin, depart silently and swiftly, leaving the woman alone with Jesus.

This version of the memorable incident may not be the correct one, but it is interesting and precisely to the point. Whether or not Jesus actually wrote on the ground the specific sin of each man, His very act of silence and of eloquent indictment sent a chill of self-judgment to every man's soul. What! only those without sin cast a stone at this sinful woman. It was an embarrassing answer. It went straight home. Not a man could meet the test. They went out from the eldest to the youngest, having adjudged themselves to be guilty. There is a far-reaching rebuke and warning in the answer of Jesus to the Scribes and Pharisees. Nothing is easier than the picking out of a person who has committed a notorious sin and in self-righteous pride pointing the finger of scorn at the poor unfortunate. It has been one of the travesties of justice that individuals have been made to suffer for crimes, while communities that were *particeps criminis* have gone scot-free. Every wrong that is committed by an individual has in one way or another a rootage in the

wrong of a community. We are under obligation to revise our methods of dealing with sin and transgression of the moral law. As members of society we are in part to blame. Each one of us has a share in the crime of poverty, drunkenness, and the long list of sins. Not each one of us is individually guilty, but we are a part of an order of society that has produced and sometimes fostered these delinquencies.

III

The accusers one by one go away and Jesus is left alone with the accused. Again it is not difficult to imagine the scene. There is Jesus with His stainless life, His pure heart and clean mind; and there before Him is the woman who feels in her soul the searching purity of the Teacher to whom she has been brought. She makes bold to look in His eyes and upon His face, and in the presence of such wholeness of character, she sees her own life, and away deep down chords begin to vibrate that have been silent for years. What will Jesus do with the woman? Will He rebuke her? Will He deal with her as He did with the Scribes and Pharisees? Never. He lifted Himself up and said unto her, "Woman, where are they? Did no man condemn thee?" And she said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go thy way, from henceforth sin no more." Jesus saw that this woman was self-condemned, and out of penitence there comes always a new life. He sought to restore confidence and impart hope to this woman by letting her know that He believed in her. Others might expect her to sin; He expected her to abandon

sin. The very attitude that Jesus took toward her brought about a new attitude on her part toward her sin. There is no making light of her sin on Jesus' part, but the dealing with the situation in such a way as to bring about repentance which is a ceasing to do evil and a learning to do well.

We do not know what became of this woman. She drops out of the narrative as abruptly as she came in, but we may believe that from that hour she was a changed soul. The recollection of that experience would be a memory to bless and burn. We have a right to believe that she went away from the presence of Jesus that memorable day with hope singing in her heart. Oh, that the world would begin to deal with men and women according to the standard of Jesus Christ. Society has been slow to adopt the single standard of morality. Woman is the age-old sufferer —man the long time privileged sex. On the whole this is "a man's world." Only since the great war has England placed both sexes on an equality in the matter of divorce. Hitherto the husband could divorce his wife for infidelity to the marriage vow, the wife had no recourse against her husband for a similar wrong. In one of our states, until a few years ago, the law permitted a husband to obtain a divorce upon proof of a single violation of the marriage vow, while the wife was compelled to prove habitual violation on the part of her husband. The debt of woman to the teachings and spirit of Jesus is unpayably great. He championed her rights as He did the rights of the child. In this singularly impressive incident of the lone woman and her accusers, there is more than a suggestion of the

right method to pursue in dealing with sin and society. Penalizing the woman and letting the man go free is neither just nor expedient.

"Christ's method of dealing with the social evil," said Dr. Lyman Abbott, "is in principle precisely the same as His method of dealing with crime—the method, not of permission and regulation, not of mere prohibition and punishment, but of compassion and cure. It is the method which Christian charity is pursuing with reasonable measure of success in individual cases—but, alas! in too few. It condemns licentiousness in man and woman alike—in one no less than in the other. In so far as this licentiousness is a violation of the social order, Christ's method would prohibit it by law. The lawbreaker would be arrested, not to be punished for her sin, but to be cured of it, to be separated from the evil influences which would lead her into paths of virtue, and wherever the cure could not be effected, to be kept in confinement for the rest of her life, not to punish her for past sin, but to protect her and to protect the community from sin in the future. Not until our civilization shall have wrought out in life what Hawthorne wrought out in 'The Scarlet Letter' and the man takes his stand in the pillory by the woman, and the scarlet letter is on the breast of the one as on the breast of the other, and both alike bear the ineffable shame, and each helps the other back to the ineffable glory, shall we find Christ's remedy."

In connection with this Scripture I recall an episode which will remain with me as long as memory lasts. A member of the church to which I minister brought to my study a young woman whom she had res-

cued from the streets. The girl—for she was little more—was the victim of betrayal, and had been driven away from her makeshift of a home and deserted. She was different from most of her type, the charm of modesty was not all gone, the bloom of maidenhood had not been entirely destroyed. She was broken utterly and desired to begin life all over again and accept Jesus as her Saviour and Friend. She had had little, if any, religious training and knew scarcely nothing of the content of the Scriptures, even the Gospels. As I looked at her I was deeply touched by her plight. She resembled a beautiful winged butterfly that had been caught in a driving rain, beaten to earth, bruised and unable to fly. I found speech difficult and decided to read to her from the New Testament. Something prompted me to turn to this passage from St. John which I read slowly and without comment. When I had finished I looked up to see before me a face transfigured, though suffused with tears. Her eyes were wet but eloquent with the speech her tongue could not tell; they spoke as so many words and said: "Is that in the Bible? Did Jesus say that? O, God be praised! there is hope and pardon for me, even me!"

III

THE CHAPTER OF CHAPTERS

A Summit View From the Mount Blanc of the Holy Scriptures

John 17:4.

I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do.

John 17:15.

I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.

John 17:19.

And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

John 17:20-21.

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe Thou didst send me.

John 17:26.

I in them.

III

THE CHAPTER OF CHAPTERS

When John Knox, the famous Scotch reformer, was dying, his wife sat by his bedside and asked if she should read from the Word. "Yes," he replied, "where I first cast anchor." Thereupon she read from John, the seventeenth chapter. As the dying man grew weaker and the power of speech failed him, another standing by called to him loudly as to one journeying afar, "John Knox, hast thou hope?" He slowly lifted his finger and pointed upward. That was all, and that was enough.

Others besides Knox have called for this chapter as the lamp of life grew dim. It is said of Bossuet, the renowned French preacher, that by his request this chapter was read to him sixty times during his last illness. Profounder Scripture than this there is not in all the Bible. It is the great High Priestly prayer of our Lord, and there is none like it. In the course of his last lecture given shortly before his death, Melanchthon said: "There is no voice which has ever been heard either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the son of God." Fitting, is it not, that at the close of his most remarkable discourse there should follow this most remarkable of His prayers? The

twenty-six verses of this chapter fall naturally into four sections: First, Jesus' prayer for Himself; second, Jesus' prayer for His disciples; third, Jesus' prayer for subsequent believers; and fourth, a final confidential utterance from Son to Father.

One approaches this intercessory prayer of Jesus' with something akin to awe. A great and devout student of the Scriptures who spent a life interpreting and proclaiming the Gospel, never felt himself equal to attempt a sermon on John seventeen. It is possible to understand such a view without endorsing it. For the same reason an artist might refuse to paint the ocean because the waters of the great deep are so vast and wonderful; or hesitate to put a mountain scene upon canvas because, at its best, such a picture would be partial and incomplete. This great prayer has been preserved, not merely for our admiration, but for our study and instruction. It may be remarked in passing that the key words of the chapter are "glorify," "keep," and "sanctify."

I

"I GLORIFIED THEE ON THE EARTH; HAVING ACCOMPLISHED THE WORK WHICH THOU HAST GIVEN ME TO DO. AND NOW, FATHER, GLORIFY THOU ME WITH THINE OWN SELF WITH THE GLORY WHICH I HAD WITH THEE BEFORE THE WORLD WAS." The marvel of these words is twofold. They show that God is glorified most by a life obedient to His will; that character, and not time, is most necessary in order to do our work. There is something positively sublime in the attitude of Jesus here, as fully conscious that He had

yielded perfect obedience to the Father's will. This is something more than "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Here is a life owning such one-ness with the Father and consciousness of duty done, so as to be able to say in truth, "Father, I have done Thy will on earth as it is done in heaven." Only thirty-three years of life and yet completion crowns Jesus' career. What orderliness there was in His life, no haste, no flurry, no perturbation, but calm and quiet doing of His work to the end. How such lofty achievements contrast with our lives, so incomplete, so fitful, so feverish, and unfinished. Thus a great scientist nearing the end of his course cried: "Oh, that I had another century to live! I have just begun to learn." Thus an eminent author, when informed by his physician that he was incurably ill, thought of his unfinished manuscript and exclaimed, "Oh, my book, my book!" Likewise Archbishop Ussher prayed with dying breath, "O God, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission." Consider our own lives, how fragmentary they are, and particularly our lives as confessed followers of the Christ. Why, we have not fairly begun to live in Him. We are mere novices in the school of prayer; we are unacquainted with great and rich expanses of His holy Word; we are in the primary grade in the things of the Spirit. Oh, the things undone, what a host they are! "Unfinished!" we exclaim, and truthfully. Yet we catch glimpses here of a way of life possible to us beyond anything we have ever dared to dream. We learn here that life cannot be reckoned by figures on a dial, or dates on the calendar. Three and thirty years He lived in the narrow confines of a little strip of

territory not great in the eyes of the world, nevertheless, Jesus could say, "I have finished the work Thou hast given me to do."

It is because He has finished His God-given task that Jesus is able to pray to the Father, asking that He glorify Him with the glory which He had, before the world was. The life with which we have to do in this chapter of chapters, neither began nor ended in the Palestinian country. Geography can have little, if any, bearing upon things Eternal. "Before Abraham was, I am." Thus He once spoke simply and as a matter of course of the life He had with the Father before "the World was." In Christ, and only in Him, have we an understandable conception of eternal life; our relation to God and to one another in the terms of the Spirit. Nor are we to think of Eternal life as merely the prolongation of our days, but a life under new conditions and deriving power from new sources. A life of one dimension, however extended, is not necessarily a full or desirable life. To summarize Christ's prayer for Himself: He presents Himself as the dutiful Son, who has glorified the Father by perfect obedience; a life like a perfect mirror reflecting untarnished the glory of God Himself. That a mere human being could ever pray like this is difficult to believe. There is a grandeur and a sublimity in this intercessory prayer that is of the Infinite. It is of a humanity exalted to the highest degree plus a divinity as potent as it is difficult of definition.

II

"I PRAY NOT THAT THOU SHOULDEST TAKE THEM OUT OF THE WORLD, BUT THAT THOU SHOULDEST KEEP THEM FROM EVIL." Jesus prays now for His disciples. They had been with Him for nearly three years; they had continued with Him through His temptations; they were His pupils, His friends, His companions; or, to use a pastoral word that Jesus loved, His "sheep." During the years He was with them He had been their shepherd, and now that He must leave them the flock will be scattered. Therefore He commends them to the Father tenderly and compassionately; but He does not ask that they be taken from the world; He prays that they may be saved from evil. Some have eloquently advocated the separation of Christians from the world in order to be safe from its seductions. Thus, the members of certain religious orders withdraw from the world, take the vow of perpetual silence and become as living dead men. But such a manner of life does not bring immunity from temptation; one has to struggle and battle with himself even on a desert isle or in a hermit's cave. Moreover, such a way of life is not without its selfish side. What is the meaning of the New Testament terms "Salt of the earth," "Light of the world," and "leaven" unless they teach a witnessing for Christ where there be men and women to know, to see, to hear? The disciples were in the world of sin, suffering, and death, but not of the world that perishes, the world of mere sight and sound and touch. Jesus accomplished His ministry among the people, with the people and for the people. He

"went about doing good." He visited the people in their homes; mingled with them on the street; sailed with them on Galilee; met with them in the synagogue; and during the first part of His ministry the multitude thronged Him on every side. Wherever Jesus went He brought with Him such a sense of God's presence that men, women and children were never the same again. For such a way of life of the part of His disciples He now prays. He does not pray that John, Peter, James, or any of His disciples be taken out of the midst of the teeming life of the world in order that they may be removed from evil. He prays that they remain in the world and be kept from evil. And that is His prayer for you and for me, fellow-disciple of the Lord. We are not to flee from the crowd, nor avoid contact with people; we are to mingle freely with them; our lot is cast with them; we be brethren and neighbors, children of one Father, all.

Mingling thus with our fellows daily and amidst error, we are to witness for the truth; amidst the fleeting and falling things witness for "the things that cannot be shaken"; in a generation which regards sin lightly, witness for Him Whom the sins of others put to death. Jesus was holy, but God be praised, His holiness did not restrain Him from touching the hand of the leper, from declining an invitation to the homes of the publicans and sinners, or from embarrassing Him in His conversation with the woman at the well of Jacob. He was in the world of suffering, sorrow, joy, gladness, but not of the sinful world of sight and sound and appetite. And this is the great ideal He has left for His disciples. To love mankind and be willing

to serve the least and lowliest; to be very much and often in the darkest and foulest places of earth, and there bear a flaming torch and bring a spirit of purity, is to be Christian where the need is the deepest and redemption the most Christlike. If sin cannot be segregated, neither can holiness be isolated.

III

"AND FOR THEIR SAKES I SANCTIFY MYSELF THAT THEY ALSO MIGHT BE SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE TRUTH." Jesus is still praying for His disciples and He continues to pray earnestly, wonderfully. He says, "I consecrate,"—for that is what the word sanctify means, and is so placed in the margin of the Revised Version. "I consecrate myself for their sake that they also might be consecrated to the truth." This is exalted doctrine; this is supreme service; this is sacrifice of self-sublime. He lays Himself upon the altar, so to speak, but not to be consumed merely to be consumed. A basic principle of Christ's teaching and life is not to value any act, however good and noble, for the act's sake, but for the sake of others. Torture for suffering's sake differs little from pleasure for pleasure's sake. Self-surrender is at the heart of conversion and is fundamental in the Christian life. "Christ pleased not Himself," we read; and did He not say of Himself, "I do always the things that are pleasing to God." He surrendered His will to the will of God for the sake of all God's children. When He hung upon the cross and His enemies tauntingly cried, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," they spoke more truthfully than they knew. He could not save Himself

and others too. It is easy to talk about self-denial; it is another and a harder thing to practice it as a rule of life. It is comparatively easy to *deny* oneself certain things on certain days or seasons of the year, but to deny *oneself* and surrender one's will to God,—that is a far more fundamental and significant act. This idea of "others," is all through the life and ministry of our Lord. It is in the mystery of the atonement; it is woven throughout the warp and woof of the ordinances, baptism and communion of our Lord's Supper, but it has not yet won the hearts of the multitude who profess Christianity. The thought of society today is not of "others" but of self, self, self. In every phase of life self obtrudes. Self dies hard when it dies at all. Self has a way of blinding and deluding us. Self-interests protest against absolute surrender to God's will; self chides us and whispers, "fanatic," "fool," "pietist"; self seeks to stifle us and smother into silence our attempt to say, "Thy will be done."

Consecration is a word often on our lips but seldom observable in our lives in fullness and power. Society knows the meaning of the word in part and within circles or groups, but not largely or richly. Individuals have taught us what consecration is, especially mothers who freely give their all for son or daughter. Here and there a great soul marches straight to Calvary for the sake of a mighty cause, but consecration for others in the large, in business, national and international relations, has not yet captured the hearts of the world. Even at this late day a prominent captain of industry scoffs at the idea of the golden rule in business, or the teaching of the "Sermon on the Mount"

in politics. On the other hand there is a dynamic minority of wide influence who stand ready to bear witness to the law of "others" in every realm of society, willing to pay the fullest price, ready "to kiss the Cross."

IV

"THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE AS THOU, FATHER, ART IN ME AND I IN THEE: THAT THEY MAY BE ONE IN US." Jesus is now praying for all the disciples that are yet to be; for the Church and its vast membership; praying for the unity of all His followers in the closest possible spiritual unity, even as Christ is in the Father and the Father in Christ. To read these words and then to peruse church history, or merely to look about us and behold the divided state of Christendom, is to experience the emotion of indignation, if not of despair.

In America alone the Church is represented by one hundred and fifty denominations. The spectacle of controversies and bickerings and sectarian bigotry is mean and ugly when compared with the spirit of this intercessory prayer of our Lord. Let it be granted that this prayer is for spiritual unity; it is that, of course, but a spiritual unity should result in a visible unity, beautiful to behold, glorious to experience. It cannot mean uniformity of method; it does mean a unity of spiritual power and of faith and of fellowship that will reveal to the world a united and indivisible Church, powerful and triumphant. When the disciples of our Lord are united in Him even as "He and the Father are one," the world will not longer doubt the Divine mission of Jesus. The trouble is that thousands

are united to human creeds, fettered to antiquated theologies; are glorifying human leaders; enslaved to human traditions; and so yield an anæmic will and a divided heart to Christ. As long as we continue to glory in men, and delight to set one man over against another, glorying in one and anathematizing the other, divisions will continue. My brethren, is not the difficulty our meager spirituality? We have everything except the power, for the power comes of the spirit. "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." The beginning of such a unity as Christ prayed for is the union of the individual disciple with his Lord. This is not a doctrine; it is an experience. It is not something believed; it is something felt and known and demonstrated.

Christian Unity, if it ever flower, must have its rootage in the life of the spirit, in the sweet soil of the soul. As the disciples tarried at Jerusalem for Pentecost they experienced a unity that was potent for every good thing. It should be remembered that they were united because they were prayerful. Their unity was the result of their prayers, not their prayerfulness of their unity. Uniformity may be realized without prayer, but never unity—which is a spiritual experience, not a form or method.

At the close of this prayer Jesus uses a pregnant phrase; namely, "I in them." St. Paul employs a similar phrase when he writes: "Christ in us the hope of glory." And still again, "I have been crucified with Christ; no longer do I live; but Christ lives in me." One of the foremost educators in England had a son who was slow-witted. His mind was strangely dulled

because of some disease of babyhood. The ordinary teachers failed with the boy; they could get nowhere with him. Then the father took charge—that great soul, whose mind was one of the best trained in all Europe, whose personality was rich and wholesome throughout. That strapping six-footed father somehow let himself right down into the inner life of that little slow-witted son. Very slowly, but steadily and wonderfully the mind of the boy began to expand. The father companied with him day after day. Slowly but surely the mind of the lad began to show extraordinary development. He commenced to lead his classes; he finished the lower schools with honor; lo! he went to Oxford and carried off the prize. The secret of his success was that his father became part of the very life of his son; that in a strange, yet very practical, fashion, that father was himself and his son at the same time. If an earthly father can be himself and in his son at the same time, if an earthly father can be in his son in so wonderful a way, how much more can God be in His children with transforming power.

It is with this thought "I in them" that Jesus concludes this memorable prayer, and this fact of Christ *in us* is the open and puissant secret of Christian power and victory.

IV

THREE TIMES A DAY

A Plea for Fixed Seasons of Private Devotions

Daniel 6:10.

And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

IV

THREE TIMES A DAY

The scene is Babylon, famed for her pomp, her wealth and prodigality. Babylon was a pagan city where pleasure ran riot and iniquity flourished. Living in Babylon and prominent there, but not of Babylon's worldly life, was a prophet of the most High God. Though of alien race and religion, this man, by sheer force of his ability, had been elevated to the high office of Prime Minister. Naturally, Daniel became the target of a thousand jealousies and intrigues. His enemies sought to discover some weakness in his life, some failure in probity wherein they might accuse him to the king. They sought diligently and found nothing. They concluded then that the only way in which this faithful servant of the king could be embarrassed and put out of office would be through interference with his religion. His enemies therefore cunningly devised a law and secured its approval by the king that whoever offered a petition to any God save King Darius would be thrown into a den of lions. Such a law once passed in Babylon could not be repealed or modified; it was unalterable and had to be enforced.

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, it did not affect his way of life in the smallest particular. He went into his house and his windows being open

in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks unto his God as he did before. Is it not a superb courage that leads a man to such a decision in the face of death itself? Is not a religion that will bear transplanting under such conditions a tremendous factor in personal life and in society? But it is not my purpose to make the character of Daniel nor his fidelity to his faith amidst any and all circumstances my theme this morning, though these are inviting subjects and much needed by our times. Instead I want to turn to Daniel's habits of stated prayer as the inspiration for a sermon on the need and power of fixed seasons of private prayer in daily life.

Three times a day in his own home and on his knees, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, Daniel prayed. Three times a day! The Holy Scriptures are full of precepts and examples of prayer at certain periods of the day. In one of the Psalms we read: "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord: in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and look up." In another: "Mine eyes prevent the night watches that I might meditate in Thy word." In still another: "I remember thee upon my bed and meditate upon Thee in the night watches." And again: "Evening, noon, and morning will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice." Evening, noon, and morning for prayer to the Heavenly Father—three times a day! Let us follow the order according to the Psalmist and begin with the—

EVENING

Most people who pray at all pray in the evening or at night. The need of God's protection and the presence of His brooding spirit is more apparent in darkness than in light. When the twilight deepens and the night enshrouds land and sea, doubts and fears hold carnival. In a "Sonnet To Night," pronounced by Coleridge the finest in the English language, Joseph Blanco White uses the impressive phrase "Mysterious Night" and then attempts to describe the emotions of primitive man when for the first time he saw the night envelop the earth. Yes, the night is full of mystery, of hidden peril and unknown evil.

When one lies down to sleep he knows not but that the sleep of life may become the sleep of death. Thus, even in the prayer we teach the children is the phrase—

> If I should die before I wake
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Yes, by all means there should be prayer at evening, after the day is done and the work ended. It is good to come to the Father then just as we are, and ere we seek rest in sleep to lay before Him the happenings of the day—defeats, victories, griefs, disappointments, joys, hopes, yearnings, all—and He who knoweth our frame will understand. Yes, prayer at evening for forgiveness, for cleansing of mind and heart, for rest in sleep—that gift of God which knits up the raveled sleeve of care, restores worn tissues, and revives drooping spirits.

Prayer at evening becomes us all. It affords a unique opportunity to think God's thoughts after Him.

Dr. Horace Bushnell confessed that he fell asleep every night while talking with God. Thus, too, a great German theologian and scholar was accustomed before going to bed to bow his head like a little child and say —"Thank God it is the same with us as it was before. Nothing has come between us; Thou art my Father and I am Thy child." In like manner an aged woman, long a sturdy Believer and trustful Disciple of the Lord, repeated as she lay in bed, over and over again, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is in me; bless His holy name." Thus quoting from the one hundred and third Psalm she would fall asleep, her room fragrant with the peace of God. The building of character does not cease with our waking hours. The mind is not entirely inactive, the thoughts that linger in the brain as sleep comes on are potent surely. Well it is for us to sink into slumber with the thought that the Great Shepherd is watching over us—that Shepherd of our souls who neither slumbers nor sleeps. The insomnia of God is a blessed truth, and the thought of it may help bring blessed peace to wearied eyes, rest to worn and shattered nerves, sleep to a distraught and uneasy mind.

NOON

The Psalmist affirmed that he would pray at the noon hour, and for most of us that is an unusual prayer season. It is a time when the vigor and light of the sun is at its zenith. The whole world seems throbbingly alive at noon-day, and yet it is a period of pause and a time of refreshment and relaxation. In the country the dinner bell summons the farmer from

the field and there is a brief span of rest for man and beast. In the great cities, shops, factory and office buildings pour forth their flood of human-kind at the noon hour. The cafés, the restaurants, the hotels are filled with people eating and drinking; the children are home from school; it is a time of sociability and a period of release from the exactions of duties and responsibilities.

Few people pray at noontide. There seems to be less need of it than at any other time. If the sun be shining, his rays are never so garish as at the noon hour. The world is bathed in sunshine and light. Perhaps we feel freer from need of Divine help and more ready to abandon ourselves to relaxation at the noon hour than at any other period of the day. But one needs God and a realization of His presence then as well as at other times. "We stumble at noon-day as in the twilight," acknowledged Isaiah. A few moments of private devotion at noon, the bowing of the head while sitting at the desk or standing at an open window, looking out over the roofs of nearby buildings, or if it be in the country, gazing upon the quiet field, the woodlands or the mountains. In such a manner may one enjoy the privilege of prayer at noontide.

It has been suggested that noon is the best of all times to pray for the world, and in this connection it has been said that when it is noon in Britain the largest portion of the earth is in light; that when it is twelve o'clock in London it is eight o'clock in the evening in China, and it is four o'clock in the morning on the Pacific Coast of America. Precisely what o'clock it may be elsewhere when it is midday here, I do not know,

save that it surely is midnight somewhere for millions of God's children. How fitting a period to pray for the peoples of all Nations, and particularly the missionaries in China, in Japan, in Tibet, in India, in the Philippines, in the Islands of the Sea, at noon. How blessed to remember the missionaries of the Cross—men, women and little children—at the noon hour. At high noon the hands on the clocks point straight upward. Time, too, to look up and pray to the Father of us all.

MORNING

Prayer at the beginning of the day is peculiarly fitting. Alas! of the great host of people who pray in the evening, but few keep the morning watch. We feel the need of prayer at night, and pray accordingly, but in the morning, with light streaming all about us, the need seems not so great. Alas, millions begin the day prayerlessly. Now of all hours of day or night the morning provides the most radiant of seasons for communion with God. If there be mystery in the darkness of the night, there is poetry in the glow and glory of the morning. In the early hours of the day the world seems fresh from the Creator's hands—the silent ministry of the dew is moist on grass and flower and tree. A sunrise is never commonplace. In springtime or early fall, or on a clear day in winter, the rising of the sun is a spectacle of wonder and beauty. Lo! the first faint flushes of the eastern sky, the clear notes of bird songs, soft breezes stirring in the branches of the trees, and then the sun lifts himself above the horizon like a great globe of fire, and earth and sky

are flooded with a golden glow. Little wonder the maiden in Browning's famous poem sings with ecstasy of sheer delight just to be living—

The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven,
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing,
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

With the dawn of a new day comes the necessity for a walk of faith. Who knows what a day may bring forth? It may bring grief and sorrow, disappointment and defeat. It may offer gifts of victory and a sense of elation. It may bring new friendships or possibilities that can mar or break old friendships! It may be cloudless or stormy, wind-swept or tornado-torn, we cannot know in advance. Therefore we need to begin the day with prayer. The morning has been the favorite prayer-period for most of the great saints of God. Robert Murray McCheyne, one of Scotland's most gifted preachers, says: "I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours of six to eight are the most uninterrupted." Dr. Judson began each day with a period of private devotions with the Father, and gave it as his conviction that "Thou canst leisurely devote two or three hours every day to secret prayer and communion with God." David said: "Early will I seek Thee." Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David Brainerd, missionary to the

Indians, found no day satisfying that did not begin with prayer to God. Martin Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer in the morning, the devil gets the victory through the day." G. Campbell Morgan is well-known in America. He is an expository preacher *par excellence.* His books are numerous and widely read. He preaches with power and with unction always. What is the secret of his power? It is this: For more than a quarter of a century he has spent two hours every morning in prayer and with no other book within reach except the Holy Scriptures. Alexander MacLaren who was one of England's greatest of preachers, a strong soul, a prophet of the Almighty, kept the quiet hour every morning from nine until ten, and in the solitude of that silence some of his greatest sermons had their birth. There used to be a celebrated statesman in England who held the post of cabinet minister through a time of stress and great anxiety. This man, more than all the others, was calm, unhurried, possessed, and resourceful. The Prime Minister of that day applied to this cabinet minister an unusual name. He called him "the central calm." He called him this name because the statesman's calmness made him the center of the cabinet meeting. To him the others turned in anxious moments. What gave him calm and peace and power? The statesman's wife made known the secret. She explained that her husband never began a day, however late he was obliged to be up, without a quiet hour with God and the Holy Scriptures. Verily he had meat to eat that his fellow cabinet officers knew not of.

A "central calm." Is not that what the world needs

in this feverish and chaotic generation? A central calm at Washington, at London, at Tokio, at Paris—yea, a central calm in every capital in the world. A central calm in state, in church, in business, industry, and above all else a central calm in every home; a realization of the presence of Almighty God and a willingness to receive the fullness of His power.

"Evening, noon, and morning," exclaimed the Psalmist, "will I pray." Would that we too could say as much. Our need, our greatest need in this hour, as in all other hours, is prayer. The greatest thing a man or woman can do is to pray. Why? Because by praying we open up a channel for God's power; we throw ourselves into spiritual gear, so to speak. God fills us and uses us mightily. There must be habitual prayer if there be spiritual health. How shall we be able to meet the awful problems of our day; how can we live and move and have our being midst "change and decay" without this communion with God? We may exist, but we cannot really live without it. Three times a day! Is this too often to go to God in personal and private prayer? Not merely three formal periods in which to pray mechanically or professionally, but fixed seasons of the day for real prayer, quiet moments and fruitful moments with our Lord. When we have learned to keep these seasons inviolate, nothing can possibly occur that will throw us off our guard, put us to shame, or really defeat us. God will provide a way when none is in sight; God will meet our weakness with His own strength; God will atmosphere us with poise and victory and make all things beautiful in His time.

There is a little book much heralded these days—it is entitled "The Daily Dozen" and it is a manual of the simplest kind of physical exercise. Walter Camp, the famous athlete, is the author. It contains twelve elemental bodily movements designed to develop muscles little used and to build the body up, if regularly followed. These exercises are not beneficial if done merely occasionally or spasmodically, but when they are daily used they impart to the body not only suppleness and grace, but they also fortify it against the inroads of disease. Tens of thousands of men and women the country over are following faithfully the instructions in the little book and thereby increasing their physical vigor.

This is all very well. Bodily exercise profits a great deal, and a well set-up and smooth-running physical system is a sturdy aid in the battle of life. It is easy to forget that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. But alas and alack!—how few exercise the prayer faculty. How anæmic and impoverished and feeble is the prayer life of the average church member. The prayerlessness of the Church is the greatest tragedy of this generation. It is deadening and defeatening. O! for ten thousand times ten thousand who are willing three times a day to pray with the windows of their soul opened toward the God of Jesus Christ. Given such seasons of spiritual refreshment and Almighty God will bear His arm and shake the community for righteousness, for justice, for newness of life, and the consequent redemption of city, town and county.

Prayer at evening?—Yes! Prayer at noon?—*Yes!* Prayer in the morning?—A thunderous *YES!*

V

A GOD WHO WILL NOT LET US GO

Some Reflections on the Marvel of the Divine Pursuit

Psalm 139:1-12.

O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether.

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in sheol, behold, Thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

Even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light about me shall be night:

Even the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee.

V

A GOD WHO WILL NOT LET US GO

In the opinion of many devout students of the Scriptures, the one hundred and thirty-ninth is the noblest utterance of all the Psalms. A great Scottish theologian said, "This is the Psalm which I should wish to have with me on my death-bed." Why should a dying man prefer the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm to the tenderer and more familiar portions of the Psalter? This Psalm lacks the pastoral beauty of the twenty-third; the brilliant didactic qualities of the nineteenth; the mournful cadence of the ninetieth; the plaintive tenderness of the one hundred and third; but it is loftier and more majestic in thought than any one of these or all four. The author is in an exalted mood; he senses God everywhere; he conceives of man as beset by God on every side and pursued by his all-pervading presence. Thus, upon reflection, it is seen that this is a fitting passage of Scripture for one to read as he faces some impending and unknown vicissitude or, awaits "the great teacher—death." For the Psalmist is sure not only that God is, but also that He is pursuing him persistently and not in anger but in love.

The exalted mood of the Psalmist in this 139th composition is worthy of comment. He finds God everywhere. He finds him at once and without diffi-

culty. How different his mood from that of Job who, in an experience of depression and doubt exclaimed, "O, that I knew where I might find Him; that I might even come to His seat." Human moods are variable always; like tides of the sea they rise and fall. Sometimes God seems nearby; so sure we are of His presence that we uncover and bow the head; again we glimpse Him faintly as across some vast area or fail to see Him at all.

Mark Twain has left an account of a camping experience in the Maine woods, when Horace Bushnell—the distinguished Christian scholar—was a member of the party. The humorist described the first night they slept in God's great out-of-doors, and particularly the prayer that Bushnell offered before they fell asleep. It must have been a remarkable prayer for it made the company of campers realize the presence of the Divine. Mark Twain was deeply impressed, and commenting on the incident years afterwards, said, "God seemed so near that I fancied I could reach out anywhere that night and touch Him." But when the famous author was bereft of his devoted wife and a lovely daughter, the darkness was thick about him and he sensed God nowhere. Nor is there anything more pathetic than his confessedly faint sense of the Divine presence as he himself entered the valley of the shadow. The exalted moods of life should be used to the fullest. They are given us for a great purpose. By the mountain-top experiences we should shape our lives and not by those of the valley of doubt and gloom. Such elation of the Spirit as is expressed in this Psalm is a tonic for the soul; and as cold water is to thirsty travelers, so these

great affirmations of God's everywhereness soothe and comfort the weary heart. But these are general comments and it may be well to observe more particularly the teachings of this notable Scripture and the lofty conception of a God whose presence fills the world and thrills the Psalmist's soul. It is interesting to look at these verses one by one.

"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me." Could anything be more thorough-going? God knows us completely. "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth we are dust." Not only so, but He knows us because He has "searched" us. "Searched" is a strong word. It means to "dig deep." It has the idea of minute investigation and of closest scrutiny. Here is knowledge too wonderful for us. We think we know each other, but we are mistaken. Intimate friends and kinspeople know one another but partly. God knows us altogether and wholly. The mind of the Psalmist is flooded with this truth and he proceeds to expand upon it in various ways.

"Thou knowest my downsittings and mine uprisings." These are interesting words. They are comparable with another phrase made familiar by much Bible usage; namely, "Our going out and coming in." It may be by the use of the terms "downsittings" and "uprisings" the psalmist has reference to our stumbling and falling, our blunders and failures, and our consequent rising to begin all over again. God knows our modes of life, whether of action or of repose, our sleeping and our waking hours. Yea, whatever the day or the night may bring, our heavenly

Father knows. The God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

"Thou compassest or winnowest my path . . . and art acquainted with all my ways." This is a stronger statement yet. It implies a still closer and more accurate knowledge on God's part. The Psalmist avers that God "winnowest" the way that we go. That is an eloquent term. As the old time farmer used to winnow the grain, thus separating the chaff from the wheat, so to the Psalmist's mind God sifts out or winnows our paths; the way that we go is God encircled if we only knew it. We may forget Him, He forgets us never. He knoweth the way we take.

"For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." The Psalmist could not have phrased the knowledge of God more strongly than this. Even before we frame the word He has knowledge of the thought that lies back of the speech. Verily we every one have need to pray—"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart find acceptance in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer."

"Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me." Ours is a besetting God. The word "beset" has fallen into an unfavorable meaning. We speak of "besetting sins"; why not speak of a besetting God, a God who besets us before and behind and lays His hand upon us. The idea is not that of a heavy hand, but of a fatherly and compassionate pressure. It is the hand of love and of mercy and of long suffering. It is a precious thought; a beautiful figure; a paternal picture.

From these exalted thoughts of God's presence and knowledge the Psalmist proceeds still further. He maintains that it is impossible to escape the Divine Spirit; that no man can flee from the presence of God. If he ascends into heaven or makes his bed in the grave, lo, God is there. If he takes the wings of the morning and flies to the uttermost parts of the earth, God pursues him. Darkness and light are alike unto Him. Everywhere and all the time he perceived God pursues His children, and in manifold ways. Surely this is a Psalm extraordinary. The spirit of God is contemplated as boundless and represents man as attempting to escape from God and failing The poets have occasionally made this thought the theme of their verses, and none more dramatically than Francis Thompson in his strangely haunting poem entitled, "The Hound of Heaven." In verses once read that can never be forgotten, the poet describes the Divine presence pursuing him persistently, through every vicissitude, and undefeated by his efforts to elude Him at last triumphantly possesses the pursued who acknowledges Him as his all in all.

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears
From those strong feet that followed, followed after
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a voice beat
More instant than the feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me"
. . . . . .
Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from these, who dravest Me."

The unique quality of the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm is that it exalts a conception of God not common throughout the Old Testament. The devout Israelite for the most part worshiped God as some awful and distant Deity. He thought of Jehovah more often as a Judge and King than a Father. He bowed before a Magistrate and a Monarch. He conceived of worship in particular localities and was given to reverence for Holy places. He thought of Jehovah as the God of the Jewish people only. Thus the idea of God in many portions of the Old Testament is a circumscribed and narrow conception. In the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, however, the author perceives the presence of God as filling the universe, and more, he sees man striving to flee from Him, seeking to hide from Him and all in vain. God is inevitable, unavoidable, unescapable. In all verity he is a God that will not let us go.

This is a profound conception of Deity—this thought of the Divine Spirit searching out the hearts of men and filling all the universe and pursuing man ever and always. But to some it may be, and frequently is, vague, intangible and impersonal. There is an aloofness about the idea and a mysticism in it that does not

satisfy the hearts of all humanity. I think of the little girl who had been put to bed and left alone in the dark in a room upstairs. The other members of the family were down stairs immediately under the child's bedroom and were laughing and talking. By and by they heard the child crying. The mother went to the room, knelt by the bed, put her arms around the little girl and asked her the trouble. "I was afraid of the dark," the little girl sobbed. "The dark won't hurt you, dear, God is here," comforted the mother. Then the crying broke out afresh and between sobs the little girl answered: "Yes—I know—God's here—but—I—want —someone—with—a—face." Pathetic words and yet ever so natural. Yes, we want someone with a face, with eyes to see and ears to hear, with voice to speak, with ministering hands, with beating heart—for such a companion and comforter does humanity still cry and God has heard and answered that cry.

Long, long ago in an upper room in Jerusalem a very strong and radiant personality—a companion, friend and teacher announced to the group who had been with Him for nearly three years that He was going away; that He was obliged to leave them. He spoke to them of a home where there were many mansions; informed them that He was going to prepare a place for them, and assured them that He would come again. He also said that He was the way, the truth, and the light, and that no man could come unto the Father but by Him. The little company were sad and filled with a nameless dread of approaching disaster. One of that group named Philip asked the great companion a question: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." Tell us about God, explain Him to us.

He seems so far away. We cannot see Him or hear Him, or know Him, but we want to know Him. Show us the Father and it will satisfy us, as nothing else can satisfy us."

The world-cry of Philip was answered by Jesus, and surpassingly great is the answer: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Yes, this is the answer: "God having spoken at sundry times and divers manners hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His Son." It is well to range the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm alongside the fourteenth chapter of John. The Psalmist in a measure anticipates the revelation of God in Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of God seeking His children, pursuing them constantly and persistently with His everlasting love. Behold the heavenly Father seeking His children in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. This exalted teaching of the Psalmist is illustrated and amplified in a most countless way in the teaching of the Christ. Jesus taught that the very hairs of our heads are numbered; that not a sparrow falls without God's knowledge. Such teaching is akin to that of this Psalm, only fuller and more intimate.

His parables of the shepherd seeking his sheep; the woman searching for the coin; of forgiving one's enemies seventy times seven; of going the second mile,—all these figures, incidents, ideals, are but outcroppings of this idea of God as seeking, pursuing, following His creatures, never abandoning them, but always and ever in the pursuit Divine.

Jesus Himself was the incarnation of the Divine Pursuer. He was the "sent one." He explained His mission as a coming to seek and to save the lost. The church—His body—is a medium of the spirit seeking to win men for the new life as heirs of Jesus Christ, and members of the family of God. Perhaps the loftiest explanation given by any New Testament writer of the purpose of God in Jesus is that of Paul when he says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

In the light of this Psalm and the trend of Biblical teaching, much in our theology needs revision. We talk and pray and sing as though God were reluctant to bless us; as if He were so busily engaged elsewhere in His boundless universe as to necessitate our entreaty and supplication to make Him aware of our need and distress. We forget, if, indeed, it has occurred to us, that we are the objects of His pursuit, His love, His wisdom, His knowledge. We are seeking to ~~illude~~ elude Him, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes willfully. What means this restlessness, this wistful yearning of the multitude for pleasure, for recreation, for change? What is the reason for this mad scramble for possession, position and fame? Is it not because great hosts of men and women are seeking to escape Almighty God; fearing to surrender to the Divine Will lest some darling sin must be abandoned; skeptical that spiritual riches are comparable with material wealth? O! the wonder of the God who will not let us go, the God who was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. We forget Him; we abandon ourselves to a way of life that is Godless, but He never forgets, never

abandons, never ceases to pursue us. And God pursues us in ways that are diverse and totally unlike. He speaks to us by the still small voice of conscience, and if we refuse to listen he speaks to us in the thunder of some event in our lives that shakes us to the foundation. The Divine Spirit reaches us sometimes through the counsel and faith of the aged and the afflicted; sometimes by the hand of a little child; sometimes the Spirit pursues us by the medium of a dear friend or of a beloved kinsman; possibly through the ministry of an entire stranger. Yes, God seeks us and follows after us, using a hundred different tokens; sometimes He uses the seasons, the loveliness of spring, the mellow splendor of summer, the glory of mid-autumn, the wonder of wintertime, the stars by night and the radiant sun by day; through roses, hollyhocks and lilies; through books, pictures, music—through and by all these agencies, and still on and on that love that will not let us go follows us, refuses to be baffled, claims us unceasingly.

When we think of God in this light, which is the light all aglow on the mountain peaks of Old Testament teaching, and the great Light in Jesus Christ, we are humbled and made to tremble, not with fear but with the deepest joy. For this is the greatest love of earth and heaven—the Love that will not, can not, let us go.

> That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
> And is thy earth so marred,
> Shattered in shard on shard?
> Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me.
> . . . . . .
> Rise, clasp my hand, and come!

VI

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

How God Schools His Prophets and Provides for Their Successors

II Kings 2:13-14-15.

And he took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they were divided hither and thither; and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho over against him saw him, they said, the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.

VI

THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH

The second chapter of II Kings is pervaded with what Sir Robertson Nicoll calls "The sweet and awful sadness of the valley of the shadow." Elijah, the renowned Prophet of Israel, was nearing the end of his life. Elisha, a younger man, and his disciple, was aware that the time of separation was at hand. As the hour approached for his home going, Elijah made no secret of his preference to be left alone. He first suggested to Elisha that he tarry at Gilgal, then at Bethel, and again at Jericho. But in each instance his companion declared—"As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At Jericho a company of young men known as "The sons of the prophets," anxiously awaited the coming of Elijah, for they too knew a crisis was impending. They would have liked to accompany him, but the privilege granted to Elisha was not theirs. Fifty of their number followed the two prophets as far as they might and then sorrowfully stood and watched them until they were lost from view.

Master and pupil crossed the Jordan as by dry land, and when they had passed over, Elijah said to his companion, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee." That was a great question, and

right greatly the younger man answered, "I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." There was humility in that request. Elisha, fronting so great a crisis, felt himself unequal to continue the work of Elijah, except he possessed a double equipment of his spiritual power. The old prophet replied, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee." And lo! while the two men were conversing, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which parted them asunder, and Elijah was taken up into heaven by a whirlwind.

Beholding the spectacle, and deeply impressed thereby, Elisha cried, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof." A strange and interesting exclamation is this by which it may be supposed that Elisha believed Elijah to be as great a defense to the Israelitish Nation as an army ready for battle, and such he was.

How long Elisha stood gazing into the sky attempting to catch a further glimpse of his great companion and teacher, we do not know. The Scripture solemnly says, "He saw him no more." Alas! the hour cometh to us all, when those upon whom we lean, our teachers and our mainstays, must be taken, leaving us to get our bearings as best we can, and carry on the unfinished task. Elisha, after a custom of his day, and in token of his grief, rent his garment into two pieces. Then observing the mantle of Elijah lying on the ground nearby, he took it up, and lo, when he smote the water of the Jordan with the mantle of Jehovah,

they divided hither and thither, even as they had done for Elijah.

GOD'S LAW OF SUCCESSION IS DEMONSTRATED IN THIS DRAMATIC OLD TESTAMENT INCIDENT

God calls one worker from his post of duty only to summon another to take his place. "The King is dead; long live the King," is more than an ancient custom, it is a token of the divine law of succession. When a particularly useful person dies or is called from one field of activity to another, we are filled with a great fear lest the work not only suffer but cease altogether. We forget that no individual is wholly indispensable and that however able he was, the day will dawn when he must give place to another. The world goes forward after the fashion of a gigantic relay race. "Others have labored and ye have entered into their labors," is a truth which admits of wide application.

'Tis weary watching day by day,
And yet the tide heaves onward;
We build like corals grave on grave
But pave a path that's sunward.

This process is not only inevitable, it is also wise and beneficent. Emerson's noble words in his "Compensation" are to the point.

"We cannot part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not see that they only go out that archangels may come in. We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe there is any force in today to rival or recreate that

beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent, where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith, 'Up and onward for evermore!' We cannot stay amid the ruins. Neither will we rely on the new; and so we walk ever with reverted eyes, like those monsters who look backwards."

The infinite variety of personality gives color and substance to history; supplies vine and rock to society. One Grand Canyon is enough for a Continent; one Elijah for a generation; one Jesus Christ for all times. But thousands of ravines and valleys compose the earth; millions of ruggedly honest men supply the salt of society, and a host who possess the Lord Christ's heart furnish light for the world.

That God has ready always a great leader when the fullness of time has come, is a familiar saying and true. Stephen, the young Christian martyr, was cut off in his glorious prime, but there stood by witnessing his death, and profoundly influenced by it, a Saul of Tarsus who would take the wondrous story to the uttermost parts of the earth. Dr. Livingstone died in the heart of Africa; died on his knees in prayer, prematurely old and broken, his labors apparently ended, but when the story of his heroic career was given to the world, thousands were moved to follow in his steps. When Major McKinley, the gentle and urbane, died by the hand of an assassin, and was succeeded by a man scarcely past middle life and of a

bold impetuous spirit, the Nation almost held its breath for apprehension. And lo! Colonel Roosevelt brought to the presidency the very qualities that were most needed for that hour, and once again the law of succession was justified by its work.

It is a common heresy that we speak and act as though God was once active in the affairs of men, but had withdrawn His spirit from the world, leaving us to blunder along as best we can, dependent solely upon human ingenuity and wisdom. That was a wise word spoken by Garfield from the balcony of a New York hotel to the vast throng that filled the street, and seemed utterly dazed by the news of Lincoln's death. Quoting first from the ninety-seventh Psalm, that man of sturdy faith said: "God reigns and the Government at Washington still lives." The people were in danger of forgetting that the God of Lincoln was still active and sovereign over all. The history of religious controversy centers around human leadership and the spirit of partyism. In the Corinthian Church partyism had its birth through the glorying in men, rather than in God. The apostle rebuked the tendency sharply. "Wherefore let no one glory in men," he said, "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." How different the history of Christianity would be written if this advice had always been followed. God has not exhausted Himself in His revelation of truth to any man, or to all men. Give each teacher his just dues, but do not set Elisha over against Elijah; Mary against Martha; Peter

against Paul; Calvin against Wesley; General Booth against Bishop Brooks. Accept every teacher for what truth he has to offer and know that God will raise up other teachers and thereby cause increasing light to flood the great issues of life and death.

GOD'S METHOD OF SUCCESSION IS SEEN IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT EPISODE

God uses prepared men to continue the work laid down by their predecessors. Elijah's mantle did not accidentally fall upon Elisha. The younger man had been schooled under the older, and was the beneficiary of his companionship and counsel. Elijah called Elisha from the field where the young man was plowing. He cast his mantle upon him at that time as a symbol of his succession, and the young plowman from that day became Elijah's companion. It was after this calling of Elisha that some of the deepest experiences of Elijah's career took place. The wrong done Naboth by King Ahab, and the prophet's fiery denunciation of the King occurred after his choice of Elisha. During those full and eventful days we have no record of Elisha, but we rightfully assume that for much of the time he was with the great prophet and learning of him. In one place the Scriptures refer to Elisha as "The son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." Yes, he was a servant of Elijah, but more than a servant. Gehazi was a servant of Elisha, but never more than a servant. Propinquity to a great man cannot of itself make a prophet, but given the essential quality of mind and affections, and propinquity may be fruitful exceedingly.

It is important that we observe the human factor in the Divine law of succession, and the responsibility thereof. One way that God raises up successors to great leaders is through the training of successors by the leaders themselves. Moses had his Joshua; Elijah his Elisha; Jesus His twelve apostles; St. Paul his Timothy; D. L. Moody his Henry Drummond; Francis E. Clark his Daniel Poling. Who have we in training to receive the standard from our trembling hands and carry it on in a steadier grasp? Here is a responsibility we are slow to acknowledge in matters spiritual. In business this responsibility is widely recognized and freely accepted. Most fathers recognize it and are not unfaithful to their duty. They look forward to the day when their sons shall succeed them in business or profession, and to prepare them, for this is a thing of pride and joy. Most mothers are ambitious that their daughters shall succeed them in social and domestic life, and spare no pains to train them to become ideal hostesses. It is scarcely necessary to advise parents to train their children for society and business; they will see to that. But, alas! how few are concerned with preparing the oncoming generation for Spiritual service. And yet there can be no adequately trained Elishas except there be Elijahs willing to choose and discipline their disciples.

The greatest popular pastime in America is baseball. Prodigious sums of money are represented in this amusement which annually draws a patronage running into many millions. In order that worthy successors may be found for the famous players who command fabulous sums for their services, a nation-wide search

is carried on annually under carefully trained scouts. No village is considered too small, or community too remote for these men to visit, if there is possible material for a great catcher, pitcher, fielder or baseman.

What of the Church and succession in its leaderships for the ministry, the mission field, the Christian college, the local congregation? The solemn truth is that the paucity of available material is pathetic and wholly alarming. The average nowadays Christian home is not only indifferent to this need but sometimes even hostile to son or daughter preparing for such a career. Time was when the fondest hope of a God-fearing parent was to give a son to the ministry of the Word. The present generation, however, is receiving small encouragement toward any definite religious life. The prophet in religion has given way to the promoter, and the lure of the material has blinded the eyes of young and old to spiritual gifts.

Men and women who love the Church of the living God—whom have you in training to receive your mantle? Honored parents of Christian ideals—are you raising up sons and daughters who can be counted upon to serve and sacrifice for the Kingdom of Heaven? Teachers, and workers in the Sunday school,—have you inspired among your pupils those who will continue your labors when you are called higher? Office bearers, —are you consciously and constructively shaping the lives of the young people to follow your footsteps, to assume responsibility, and accept posts of duty? Minister of the Word,—do you know definitely that among the young men and women of your congregation there are those who are preparing for service in home or for-

eign field as ambassadors of Jesus Christ? Upon the kind of an answer present-day leaders make to these questions impend issues of immeasurable worth. The mantle of Elijah awaits an Elisha, Elijah-trained.

GOD'S LAW OF SUCCESSION IS A DISTINCT CHALLENGE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

Elijah's mantle did not fall directly on the shoulders of Elisha, it fluttered to the ground a little distance apart. It was necessary for him to take the mantle up, by that token he showed the mettle of his manhood. The mantle of leadership does not drop mysteriously from the sky and gracefully entwine itself about the shoulders of the chosen one. Men who scheme to step into other men's shoes are doomed to wear their own, however bad their state of repair. Leaders are usually called to new opportunities of leadership when they are so busily preoccupied with their work that they have no time to be casting covetous glances toward some other position. Elijah chose Elisha, that is half the successorship; Elisha served a faithful apprenticeship, and when his master's mantle fell to earth he took it up—that is the other half.

Society has yet to know a surplus of real leaders, trained workers are always at a premium. It may not be always true that the world will beat a path through the woods to the home of the man who writes a better book, makes a better mouse trap, or preaches a better sermon than his neighbor, but ninety-eight times out of a hundred it is true. Mediocrity needs to be safeguarded against discouragement, but the time will never be when perseverance and diligence do not com-

mand a reward. However far society may go in mass-movements, and it will likely go a long way, individual initiative cannot be impaired without serious loss and possible disaster.

To wear the mantle of Elijah is not to be a mere imitator. Elisha was most unlike Elijah. The older prophet loved the wilderness and solitary places, the younger, the city and the camps of Israel's armies. The Tishbite was stern and of fiery intensity; the son of Shaphat was milder, gentler, yet withal firm and uncompromising with evil. Imitators there are of every great leader, men who simulate voice, gesture, and even foibles, but the true successor possesses the spirit and preserves his own individuality.

If we wish the mantle of Elijah we shall have to make ourselves worthy of it. In order to do as much as our fathers we shall have to do more. To be as good as our fathers we shall have to be better. We stand upon their shoulders, we are the beneficiaries of their labor and love. We may not be able to match their strong intellects or their rugged characters inured by hardship and exposure, but we ought to be able to surpass them in the use of the wider knowledge and the accumulated heritage that is ours. Our temptation is to tarry at the place where they laid down the burden. Our tendency is to camp around the spot and to establish the banner where they battled. But we cannot be true to their memory unless we go forward and plant that banner on higher ground.

Elijah's mantle was the symbol of the choice of Elisha to continue the prophet's ministry. In the upper room in Jerusalem Jesus breathed upon His disciples,

symbolic of His Spirit that was soon to come upon them. He was parted from that chosen group while in the very act of blessing them. In that parting He conferred upon them no insignia of authority that the eye could see. There fell from Him no visible mantle, but they possessed His promise and that was enough until fulfillment came. The disciples tarried in prayer and expectancy, and upon them thus gathered, His Spirit came in fullness and power. Jesus was not an exception to God's law of succession; He left no successor, but He left many successors. "In going," says Bishop Brent, "Christ came in a fullness which was wanting before He went, the fullness of added availability, a higher degree of presence."

Elisha prayed for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and thereby received his mantle. The mantle without the spirit was a cast-off garment, a mere piece of cloth, but as a symbol of the spirit it was an eloquent reminder of the great prophet who wore it becomingly and with power. Jesus, in granting His Spirit gave more than the disciples had dared to ask, and thus He gives us of Himself today—superabundantly—if we will but receive Him.

So stir me Lord that I may
Give myself so back to Thee
That Thou mayest give
Thyself again through me.

VII

HABAKKUK'S HYMN

A Meditation on the Winged Words of an Old Testament Saint

Habakkuk 3:17-19.

For though the fig tree shall not flourish,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labor of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength;
And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And will make me to walk upon my high places.

VII

HABAKKUK'S HYMN

This noble Scripture is a rich discovery in an unexpected place. For that matter, life is full of surprises. How often we come unexpectedly upon new discoveries. We take up a book more or less familiar; we think we know it by heart; and lo! among its score of chapters and thousands of words we find in some obscure paragraph a passage of extraordinary worth. We set out to journey over a familiar road; we think we know its every landmark, and then, to our surprise, we come suddenly upon a landscape of great beauty. We enjoy the association of a dear friend, of such long standing that we believe we know him thoroughly, only to discover some day as by a flash of lightning a new trait, a surprising courage, or some talent we never dreamed of his possessing. Thus it is with this Book of books; we think we know it fairly well, only to discover sometimes in the most casual way, new riches, new beauties, new wisdom.

Comparatively few readers of the Bible are familiar with the book of Habakkuk. An exceeding great number would find it difficult to turn to it promptly. We know nothing of Habakkuk save what may be inferred from this book that bears his name. He probably flourished in the reign of Jehoiakim, that evil King

who deliberately cut to pieces certain portions of the Scriptures that were disagreeable to him. Habakkuk is known as one of the minor prophets, yet here is an utterance worthy of a Jeremiah, an Isaiah or an Ezekiel. Thank God minor prophets may sometimes be majors in the army of the Lord!

While it is true that Habakkuk is unknown to most readers of the Scriptures, his brief but valuable book has rewarded many diligent students of the Word.

Daniel Webster, in a conversation with some friends, was asked his preference as to portions of the Bible. In reply he said, "The masterpiece of the New Testament, of course, is the Sermon on the Mount. As to the Old Testament writings, my favorite book is that of Habakkuk; and my favorite verses in chapter three —seventeen and eighteen: 'For though the fig tree shall not flourish, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' This," continued Webster, "I regard as one of the sublime passages of literature; and often have I wondered that some artist equal to the task has not selected the prophet and the scene of his desolation as the subject of a painting."

The fact that this unusually fine passage is in an obscure book of the Bible suggests that other undiscovered jewels are scattered throughout the Scriptures. Every one who searches the Scriptures for worthy goals may expect to be amply rewarded. One would hesitate to say that we are too familiar with the four-

teenth of John, the twenty-third Psalm, the thirteenth of First Corinthians, or the eighth of Romans; but it is lamentably true that we are unfamiliar with many portions of the Scriptures wrongly deemed unimportant and commonplace.

I

These winged words of Habakkuk, in which he vows that whether or not his fields prosper or his flocks increase, he will rejoice in Jehovah, approach a definition of the nature of real religion. Religion is a difficult term to define, and many misleading definitions have been written. In Acts, the seventeenth chapter, Paul in his speech in Athens tells his hearers that they are very religious, but the word literally means "superstitious" or "demon-fearing." In James, the first chapter and twenty-seventh verse, "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father" is described as "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keeping oneself unspotted from the world." This is not a definition of religion, but a description of a practical expression of the same, and a good one, too. In attempting to define religion, we usually fall into the error of selecting an aspect of religion and defining the whole by a part.

There is, for example, a ceremonial religion—a view of God that expresses itself in punctilious observance of form. The Pharisees stressed this kind of religion; they made the form an end instead of a means. Forms have their places in religion and ceremonies their uses. We may properly think of forms and ceremonies as the A-B-C of religion. One should use them

as he uses the alphabet; that is, having learned the alphabet, he passes on to the creation of sentences, paragraphs, and the formation of a vocabulary. But there are those who use form and ceremony as goals, instead of vehicles to the goal.

There is also a propositional or creedal religion, an intellectual assent to a truth or doctrine. Now, correct thinking is good, yes, more, it is necessary, but it is not of itself sufficient. The Scriptures tell us that "even the demons believe and tremble." Devils are always orthodox. The assent of the mind to a doctrine, even a Christian doctrine, may or may not be really religious. Intellectual acceptance of Christian doctrine is the beginning of a saving faith in God through Jesus Christ, but belief itself is not trust save as the bud is the flower.

Still again, there is a devotional religion. A worshipful service makes a direct appeal to the nature of some persons whose lives are not really righteous, but who are charmed by the esthetic effect of prayer or preaching, and the mystery and spiritual romance that haloes the house of God. The devotional spirit enters largely into real religion, but it is not the whole of religion.

There is likewise a practical or humanitarian religion which consists in deeds of mercy—a religion of ministry to body and mind; a religion that stresses the idea of burden bearing and succoring the unfortunate. It may ignore or profess to ignore the institutional side of religion and even repudiate the creedal and the formal. Such a practical and necessary serving of humanity is a large part of religion, but it is not all.

Habakkuk was not a stranger to ceremonial religion. As a devout Jew the various rites of purification, the numerous sacrifices and offerings, the tithing even of the smallest herbs—all these were probably observed by him. Undoubtedly he had given intellectual assent to the truths that are embodied in the decalogue. We may well believe that he found pleasure in the stately temple service, the majestic order of worship, the antiphonal choirs—that these found and fed the soul of the prophet. We know that his religion was practical and that it was social as well as individualistic. Was it not this same brave soul who wrote, "Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high that he may be delivered from the hand of evil! Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood and establish a city by iniquity."

II

Habukkuk avers in this personal confession of faith that his trust in God does not depend upon the success of his crops, the vintage of his grapes, nor his jars of olives, his flocks and his herds. He may lose a part or all but that will make no difference to his devotion to God. However distressing and hard his experience, he means that his faith shall triumph. He exclaims exultantly: "I will joy in the God of my salvation." He goes still further although it would seem that he has gone as far as possible in his avowals of loyalty and trust. He makes use in the closing verse of one of the most beautiful and poetic of allusions to be found in the Scriptures. He climaxes his great affirmation, that he will trust God whate'er befall him, with these pic-

torial words: "God maketh my feet like hind's feet and will make me to walk on my high places."

Habakkuk must have been familiar with the mountain stag or gazelle, one of the most nimble, graceful, and fleetest of creatures. The hinds make their homes in the upper regions of the mountains where they are undisturbed by hunter's dog or his master. From these secure retreats they venture down the mountain-side to feed on the succulent roots and herbage. When disturbed in their grazing by an enemy they disappear as if by magic, their feet fairly twinkling in flashes of speed; and when next one sees them they are far up the mountain safe from harm in the high places with impassable barriers between them and their foe. Habakkuk means to say that when the world seems against him and everything has gone wrong, his spirit bounds as the hind and is carried up into the high places where the armies of Jehovah are around and about him, protecting him. There is an echo of the same thought in Isaiah. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with the wings of eagles, they shall run and be not weary, they shall walk and faint not." It is an exultant faith when one is able so to live. It is a triumphant trust. It is real religion where God is loved for His own sake and not because of any material reward.

III

One sees in this seraphic passage of Scripture a spiritual declaration of independence. The soul is no longer in bondage to the letter of the law, the ceremony or the creed. The world, the flesh and the devil have

lost their power to enthrall. God is served for His own sake. Here is a religion with all of self washed out; a spiritual yet practical faith needs no defense, and is impervious to criticism. Here is a confidence in the Divine like that of the afflicted patriarch who cried amid his suffering—"Though he slay me yet will I trust him." Here is a real religion—no artifice, no hypocrisy, no mistaken emphasis or reversing of the Divine order. Here is the top round of the ladder of faith. This is the kind of religion that Paul had in mind when he wrote, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Here is a sublime confidence in God such as Jesus taught in the sermon on the Mount. "If God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

We praise God for Habakkuk, that brave soul of the long ago. We know so little about him; we know less of him than the world knows of Shakespeare, and that is precious little. We do not know how this prophet looked; the color of his eyes, the profile of his face, the tone of his voice. Yet, notwithstanding, we can almost feel the throbbing of his heart as we read his great hymn of faith. Across the centuries he speaks to us and bids us to be brave; he calls upon us to love God for His own sake and to serve Him without fear, regardless of the storms that beat upon us and the doubts and difficulties that pursue us.

VIII

THE LADDER OF PRAYER

An Elementary Lesson in the Greatest of Schools

Genesis 28:12.

And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Luke 11:1.

And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.

VIII

THE LADDER OF PRAYER

"The history of prayer is the history of religion," declares Sabatier. In truth, the history of prayer is the history of the human race. However benighted or barbarous, man has always prayed though his prayers have often been crude and mechanical. Between that far-away time when Jacob saw in the vision of the night a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and the days when Jesus of Nazareth prayed as never man prayed before or since, the idea of prayer has undergone decided change and experienced marked growth. The conception of prayer is not the same in both the Old and the New Testament, nor is this surprising since the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures is progressive, reaching its apex in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Just how largely the idea of prayer is developed in the Scriptures may be seen by a comparison of the teachings and examples of prayer in the Old Testament with that of the New. In the former, prayer is for the most part to a localized God, due to the belief that some places were holier than others; in the latter prayer is to an omnipresent God who hears the cry of His children without regard to place or time. In the Old Testament the prayers of the people are nationalistic and encrusted with the proud

belief that Jehovah is the God of the Jew only. In the New, the teaching is of a universal Father, a God who is not a respecter of persons, race or conditions. In the Old Testament the approach to God is largely—though not altogether—through priestly mediation. In the New it is taught that the lowliest of earth can go to the heavenly Father without any mediator other than the great High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Finally, the prayer for vengeance which is found occasionally in the Old Testament gives place in the New to prayer for one's enemies. Samson's dying prayer as he twined his arms about the pillars of the Philistinian palace and entreated Jehovah to help him avenge his enemies, suffers when compared with the prayer of dying Stephen for those who stoned him—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

It is interesting to think of prayer as a ladder fashioned after the similitude of Jacob's dream, a ladder reaching from lowly earth to highest heaven, a mystic means of communion between man and God, a luminous pathway of the spirit. Jacob created his ladder out of his dreams and in like manner we build the ladder of prayer as we grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Heaven is not reached at a single bound,
We build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to the summit round by round.

I

The first round in the ladder is "saying" a prayer. This is the most elementary kind of praying in the

school of Christ. It may be, and frequently is, purely mechanical. It is the repetition of certain words or phrases, but with the definite and dominate idea that God is, that He hears and is able to help us. Children "say prayers—verses" which have been taught them by parents or guardians to whom their upbringing is entrusted. And this custom is tender, beautiful and altogether wholesome. Think of the unnumbered hosts of children who every day repeat that simple, yet lovely prayer of childhood.

Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.
This I ask for Jesus' sake.

We expect children to say prayers, but grown up people also say prayers. There are groups of devoted Christians belonging to historic churches who never pray without the use of formal prayer or ritual. Whether the habitual use—in worship—of a form of prayer becomes formal or lifeless depends upon the one who prays. To repeat a prayer without any thought as to the meaning of the words—but mechanically—is not to pray but to say a prayer. When the disciples of John asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He gave them a model prayer which has been called, for some reason not entirely clear, the "Lord's Prayer." It may be questioned whether Jesus gave this prayer for such a use as we moderns make of it. I think He gave it to His disciples as a pattern by which they were to fashion their own prayers; we use it as a form. There can be no good reason for objection to its use as a form

provided it is not used solely as such. "Saying a prayer" is better than not praying at all. It is the first lesson in the prayer primer. It is the lowest round on the prayer ladder.

II

The second round is praying a prayer. This is a distinct advance over saying a prayer. It is the difference of putting a roll of music on a piano player and manipulating the same, and the playing of the music through the mastery of the keyboard. Here is where the worshiper passes from mere repetition to conscious communion with God. A formal prayer can be used to the good of man and the glory of God. I believe in extempore prayer and utilize it in public services constantly; but there are times when I cannot frame suitable sentences of my own; times when the mind is weary and the spirit lags; times when a noble liturgy becomes a necessity and a blessing.

That awful night the *Titanic* went down amid the wild terror of iceberg and frightful expanse of an unplumbed sea, a dozen men and women clung to a frail raft and battled desperately for life. Only a few survived the terrible exposure. Colonel Gracie, a distinguished American, was one who lived to tell the story. He has left the testimony that as he and his fellow unfortunates clung to the raft; their bodies immersed in the icy water; the cold stars over their heads and the cries of dying in their ears; they repeated together, and over and over again the familiar words:

> Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven—

And so on to the end and over and over again. Be sure those shipwrecked men and women did not say that prayer; they prayed as they repeated the precious petitions; they prayed as they thus communed with the holy Father; prayed in intensity, in hope, in faith. The age-old model prayer became that night a ladder reaching from the cold waters of the Atlantic to heaven and the Father's house of many mansions.

III

The third round in the ladder of prayer is praying for self. Here one recognizes personal need and expresses it in petition or supplication. The beginning of prayer for self is usually almost wholly petition, and self-centered at that. What we ask God for mirrors our inner life. Our petitions of yesterday do not look well in the light of today, and they may possibly shrivel more in the light of tomorrow. It is possible to mark the transformation of character by the difference in the character and object of our prayers. The Prodigal Son in the earlier stage of his career prayed, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." How different his accent after the "far country" experience, when broken and contrite he prayed: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." As far as the east is from the west, so far apart in spirit are the petitions "give me" and "make me." Like the prodigal, we too have prayed the "give me" prayers; "give me pleasure, give me fame, give me prestige, give me money, give me worldly success." From the selfish prayer "give me," we must turn to the noble "make me" petition; "make me true, make me strong to do the right; make

me willing to suffer for truth"; thus shall we grow in Godliness.

The prayer that Jacob offered as he set out on his journey into the new country where he was to lay the foundations of his material fortunes is selfish and of a bargaining nature. He vowed a vow and said, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on—then shall the Lord be my God." Contrast this petition with his prayer at the ford of the river Jabbok many years later when danger threatened him and retribution for the wrong that he had done Esau seemed close at hand. That night alone under the Syrian sky, alone with his conscience and his God, Jacob prayed: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." It is to be expected that our primary lessons in the school of prayer will not be as mature and free from flaw as those lessons that are learned in the crucible of experience, pain and suffering.

The prayers of the Pharisee and the publican illustrate extremes and a notable contrast in praying for self. The Pharisee prayed thus with himself and for himself: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." We have the judgment of our Lord Himself, that the publican's prayer had the approval of God. Alas, some of us never get beyond the selfish

petition, the entreaty for personal preference. We are more concerned with "mine" than "Thine." We are submerged in what Dr. F. B. Meyers calls a sea of "meism."

IV

The fourth round is praying for others. Here one's prayer life assumes a nobler spirit and deepens and widens like the channel of a river approaching the waters of the open sea. Intercession with God for others is Christlike and of the ministry mediatorial. It is worthy of comment that in the Old Testament times when the ideal of prayer was not so high as that taught by Jesus, Samuel frankly acknowledged the duty of praying for others in memorable words. Thus, when he retired from judging of Israel and gave way to Saul, the first King, he said: "Far be from me that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you." How many nowaday Christians regard it as a sin not to pray for others—pathetically few, let us confess.

It is difficult to overestimate the place and power of intercessory prayer. Many a minister has been steadied at a critical time and enheartened by a knowledge that the prayers of the people were rising daily like incense, for the blessing of God upon him and his work. Many a son or daughter away from home, out in the great world battling with strong temptations, have been mightily refreshed by the thought that mother's prayer never ceases to rise in behalf of the absent boy or girl. I confess to a sense of wonder and to a feeling of humility whenever requests reach me

for definite personal prayer for others. Thus, over the telephone one day an unfamiliar voice said: "I heard your sermon yesterday; please pray for me that I may be victor in a fierce temptation that threatens me." I open my mail and here is a letter from a little girl in a hospital far in the southland stricken with a serious malady, and asking me to pray for her. O, the marvel, the mystery, and the power of intercessory prayer.

A famous American preacher relates this story. There was a woman in his church, old, bent, poor, but somehow strangely radiant beneath her triple burden. The preacher often wondered at her brave ongoing. One day she chanced to tell him of this. Too slim her purse to give, too bent her body to serve, she was wont to clip the obituaries in the daily papers and then for each of the stricken households—to pray! Did God hear the prayer of this shut-in saint? As distinctly as a mother hears the faintest cry of her first born.

V

The fifth round of the Prayer ladder is praying "in the Spirit." This is the acme of prayer. Here the spirit of the heavenly Father and His children meet and merge; this is the prayer of triumphant consecration, "Thy will be done." There may be no articulate words, but the spirit of prayer permeates one's whole being and it is as though the entire being were vocal. The most spiritual prayers are often quite independent of form or ceremony and do not necessarily require speech. In the greatest experiences of life words are feeble and inadequate; but love and sacrifice speak in

the eloquent expression of the eye, the trembling of the chin, the tear moist cheek; just so in the highest experience of prayer there is such harmony of soul, such oneness of spirit with the Divine that speech could add nothing to the glory and the consecration of the moment.

I recall an incident so intimate and tender that the recollection is like the entering into some holy of holies. The incident is one of several growing out of the severing of pastoral ties of many years and the calling as my successor, the young man who had served for a year as my assistant. This young man and I had enjoyed a year of unbroken fellowship. I had been attracted to him upon first acquaintance, and I saw in him certain gifts that I felt sure would fit him for the educational directorship of the church. When it became apparent that he would be chosen to succeed me as minister of that old and conspicuous church, he was quite overwhelmed with the thought and could scarcely think his way through the possibilities of the promotion with the responsibilities it entailed. In the midst of those first hours of stress and uncertainty I went to his study intending to confer with him there. He did not hear me open the door. I saw him seated at his desk with his arms stretched out across the table; his face pressed against the polished surface was turned toward me; his eyes were closed. I stood a moment wondering if he were ill; then like a flash I understood, amid the anxiety and the elation of the sudden opportunity that had come to him he had turned in prayer to Almighty God for light and leading. He had bowed himself before the heavenly Father, and without any

articulate speech was seeking to find the Divine will and to merge his will into God's will. I turned and tiptoed out of the room, but there remains with me to this day the picture of that young minister falling back upon the Everlasting Arms, and the unspoken petition for guidance and strength. Thus do we build the ladder of prayer, beginning with "saying prayers" and ending with praying in the Spirit. On such a ladder the angels of God ascend and descend—messengers of His mercy and love.

In the abstract this prayer ladder may seem fanciful, but behold it now concretely in the life of Jesus Christ. It is unthinkable that Jesus ever said a prayer, but we may well believe He repeated with unction and grace some of those great prayer psalms which to this day are redolent with praise. Jesus prayed for Himself, but no selfish prayer ever found utterance with Him. He prayed for Himself that He might accomplish the work where unto He was sent. He prayed in the presence of strong temptation for the victory of the spirit over the flesh. But He prayed mostly for others. He prayed for His disciples. He prayed for them collectively and by name. He prayed for Peter and His prayer for that impetuous disciple was answered. He prayed for little children and was indignant because the disciples discouraged the mothers from bringing their children to Him. His prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John is an intercessory prayer in which He prayed for Himself, for the disciples that were then with Him and for all who should be His disciples. He prayed for the unity of believers that they might be one, even as He and the Father are one.

In Gethsemane He prayed the prayer of complete submission and resignation, "Father, if Thou be willing remove this cup from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done." On the Cross He prayed for His enemies, for those who had betrayed Him, for those who nailed Him there, for all, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Is it any wonder that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray? If He needed to pray, how much more His disciples. To the School of Prayer as taught by Jesus let us go in great numbers and for life and forever. What boots it if our beginnings of prayer are humble and feeble. If we persist we shall grow in prayer as in stature, in years, in everything. Beginning by "saying a prayer" we shall come at last really to pray in the Spirit.

The builder who first bridged Niagara's gorge,
Before he swung his cable, shore to shore,
Sent out across the gulf his venturing kite
Bearing a slender cord for unseen hands
To grasp upon a further cliff and draw
A greater cord, and then a greater yet;
Till at last across the chasm swung
The cable—then the mighty bridge in air!

So we may send our little timid thought
Across the void, out to God's reaching hands
Send out our love and faith to thread the deep
Thought after thought until the little cord
Has greatened to a chain no chance can break,
And—we are anchored to the infinite.

IX

THE HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

A Study in the Essential Truth which Underlies the Vagaries and Varieties of Spiritualistic Experiments

John 16:7. (Moffatt's Translation.)

Yet—I am telling you the truth—my going is for your good. If I do not depart, the Helper will not come to you; whereas if I go, I will send him to you.

Hebrews 12:22, 23.

Ye are come . . . to the spirits of just men made perfect.

IX

THE HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

There is good reason to believe that interest in Spiritualism is waning. The Great War with its losses, separations and sorrows contributed largely to the revival of interest in the subject, particularly the publication of Sir Oliver Lodge's much talked-of volume entitled "Raymond." A reading of this book fills one with commingled emotions. The sincerity of the author is beyond question, and the weight of his great name is impressive. Moreover, there is the throb of a father's great heart in every page; a heart bruised if not broken by the death in battle of a brilliant and devoted son. Some parts of the book are much more valuable than others, for instance the chapters devoted to Life, Death, and Immortality. Least convincing to most readers is the portion in which communications from Raymond are chronicled in minutest detail.

In the church to which I ministered for many years an old gentleman who was a devout and enthusiastic Spiritualist held membership. He was anxious to convert me to his views, sent me numerous articles, and on the occasions when I was a guest in his home regaled me with many experiences in the realm of what he called "Revealments" from the other world. He had

lost two sons in infancy, and hanging upon the walls of his living room were two life-sized portraits of young men, which, he explained to me, were painted by Spirit hands. The pictures were devoid of personality and were so palpably spurious as to deceive only the most credulous. Yet, withal, I could not but admire the old gentleman's sturdy insistence that he *knew* death does not end all.

Several reasons occur to me why Spiritualism as it is commonly explained and interpreted does not satisfy the deep yearnings with which it presumes to deal. I agree with Dean Inge—"If communication between the dead and the living were part of the nature of things, they would have been established long ago beyond cavil, for there are few things which men have wished more eagerly to believe." Then, the so-called "communications" for the most part are trivial, trifling, and unimportant. Nothing really vital has been added to our stock of knowledge through spiritualistic messages. Again, if such communications were possible it is difficult to understand why they cannot be made directly to men and women who are spiritually minded instead of through intermediaries who are often of inferior intelligence and sometimes of doubtful characters. And what is still more fundamental—if it be possible for the dead to bring us information as to the nature of the life beyond death, it is a large question whether such knowledge would not disturb the natural order of things, and hinder, rather than help, us in the life that now is. Pope's fine couplet is to the point:

> O blindness to the future; kindly given,
> That each may fill the circle marked by heaven.

These mild and tentative strictures of Spiritualism are made with due regard for the open mind as well as the good men and women who believe that the dead return. There is something in this desire to lift the veil and see what lies beyond the grave that is thoroughly human and readily understood. Not only so, but back of and underneath the trappings of Spiritualism, the tinsel and the show, there must be some truth. It could scarcely be otherwise. I do not credit highly the Spiritualism that finds satisfaction in "table-tipping," "rappings," "trumpets," "ouija boards," and trance mediums, but I believe in what I shall call "The Higher Spiritualism," by which term I mean not communication but *communion* with the spirits of the dead.

THE RULERSHIP OF THE NOBLE DEAD

Jesus said that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. It is unlikely that many people believe in "soul sleeping,"—a doctrine which holds that the vital spark is snuffed out by death until such a time as it please God to rekindle it. The dead still rule us, not merely from "sceptered urns" but from deeper sources yet. It is difficult to say which is the more powerful influence—the presence and inspiration of the living or the spiritual presence and power of those whom we call dead. Not a day passes without some reminder through newspaper, conversation, book, picture or monument of that great company who are not of the flesh but of the spirit. I open a volume of poetry, and the first selection that catches my eye is a sonnet to a great Soul who lives not in a name merely but in the thoughts, aspirations and deeds of a generation that

never knew him in the flesh. I listen to a gifted orator speaking in behalf of a worthy cause. His is a voice in the wilderness, and he pleads eloquently in behalf of the poor, the down-trodden, and the long-suffering. I see the flash of his eye and feel the thrill of his voice as he calls upon the citizenry in the name of a mighty leader, dead for more than half a century and bids us follow his spiritual guidance. We speak of the "silent majority" by which is meant the unnumbered millions who have gone the way of all the earth. Silent they are, but not powerless. Nor is this "rulership of the dead" explained by the immortality of influence, the "Choir Invisible" of George Eliot's famous poem. Here is something plus the immortality of influence, something deeper, more potent still!

It is good to visit Mount Vernon on the lordly Potomac when Spring has clothed the Virginia fields and forests in garments of velvety green, or better still when Autumn has made the landscape a riot of color —crimson, maroon and gold. What a high adventure to stroll leisurely over that spacious estate, to wander from room to room in the noble mansion, or stand uncovered by the simple and unadorned tomb where the dust of Washington reposes. So to do is to sense the dignity, the courage, the patience, of that quiet and courtly Virginian who willingly placed everything he had on the altar of liberty, and then steadfastly held his own through detraction, storm and calumny. Does he not seem alive? Do not the place, the house, the yard, the fields seem filled with his strong and intrepid spirit? Instead of being less than he was when in the flesh, General Washington in death is more than he was in

life. One feels this same emotion at Monticello where Jefferson lived and his dust slumbers; at Lincoln's tomb at Springfield, or in and about his old-fashioned homestead there; at Emerson's grave at Concord; at Mrs. Browning's at Florence, Italy; yea, and also at countless graves of those unknown to fame who were loved long since and their physical presence lost awhile. Still more important is the fact that this emotion and the stirring of the same is not confined to any particular place, indeed is independent of locality though it may be intensified by the place or occasion where the imagination is quickened.

The ministry of the Spirits of the great dead is impressively set forth in that notable oration of Henry Ward Beecher's on the effect of the death of Lincoln. I do not think there is anything to compare with it in our language either in solemn and stately cadence or the value of its deep and abiding spiritual worth. As he describes the progress of the funeral train across the States, the orator rises to majestic heights. "And now the martyr is moving in triumphal march mightier than when alive. The Nation rises up at every stage of his coming. Cities and States are his pall-bearers, and the cannon beats the hour with solemn progression. Dead, dead, dead, and yet speaking. Is Washington dead? Is Hampden dead? Is David dead? Is any man that was ever fit to live dead? Disenthralled of flesh, and risen in the unobstructed sphere where passion never comes, he begins his illimitable work. His life now is grafted upon the Infinite and will be fruitful as no earthly life can be."

This is not merely superb rhetoric; it is that and

more. The spiritual influence of Abraham Lincoln is more powerful than was his fruitful life in the flesh. Each generation is destined to be the beneficiary of his sacrificial labors, but most of all the wide world is forever blessed through the heritage of his spirit freed from all limitations, and available to everyone who knows the story of his fidelity and patience even unto death.

JESUS' SPIRITUAL PRESENCE MORE POTENT THAN PHYSICAL

Certain passages of Scripture which throw light upon the potency of the Spirit's ministry deserve to be reëxamined and studied afresh. Portions of the conversation that Jesus had with His disciples in the upper room are very much to the point. To the eleven friends He said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." Moffatt's rendering is even more suggestive: "My going is for your good." Weymouth's translation is also helpful: "It is to your advantage that I go away." Commenting on these words of Jesus', an English scholar says that it was "A loftier experience to which they would be introduced." In what does this "loftier experience" consist? What was the "advantage" that was to come through the withdrawal of Jesus' physical presence from the world? There can be but one answer: His spiritual presence was to replace His physical presence. The Holy Spirit, the "Comforter," the "Helper," the "Advocate," the "Ally," came instead. Jesus' personal ministry

was of necessity limited both by time and geography. His companionship in the flesh could only be with a chosen few. His spiritual comradeship is with all who desire Him, and has eternity for scope and range. This spiritual ministry of Jesus is without limitation save where the human will is imposed and the door of the heart unopened to His repeated knockings.

Jesus assured His disciples that they would do "greater works" than He had done, and He gave as the reason "because I go unto my Father." It is simply a fact, not only of New Testament history but of many centuries of history since the Christian Era, that Jesus accomplished through His spiritual ministry greater works by far than those done in the days of His flesh. Here is an aspect of Christian truth we are slow to receive; our stress is on the physical, our emphasis on the tangible. We are slow to believe in a spiritual ministry apart from the material with which we have not only knowledge, but familiarity. Perhaps if we were willing to believe in the priority of the spiritual, the doctrine of the physical return of our Lord would not seem so important. It is an interesting fact that the word "parousia" which is generally translated "coming" when referring to the Apostle Paul is twice translated "presence." There are able scholars who believe the word should be translated "presence" wherever it occurs in the New Testament.

It is a tendency everywhere observable to become enamored with the outward trappings; to treasure the physical vehicle above the spiritual content. Is it not noteworthy that the author of the Hebrew epistle contrasts the old order, its forms and ceremonies; Mount

Sinai with fire and smoke, the sound of trumpet, with Mount Zion the New Jerusalem, the hosts of angels, the general assembly and Church of the first born, and the Spirit of just men made perfect? It is to the latter, he says, that we are come and his argument is that these latter blessings are better than the old, are indeed best of all.

In that appointment that Jesus kept with His disciples in Galilee, He gave His final instructions to go into all the world and make Disciples of all the Nations. Then He gave the promise of His perpetual presence, saying—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Or, to quote Weymouth again: "I am with you always, day by day, even to the close of the age." Here then in another form or phrasing is the promise of the spiritual presence of Christ. To be Christ's disciple then is to practice His presence, to respond to the leadings of His spirit, to be comforted, inspired, flooded, illumined through, of, and by the Spirit. An oft-quoted saying of St. John will bear much study and reflection—"Beloved now we are children of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be; we know that if He shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for ye shall see Him even as He is." Yes, as He *is,* not as He was!

CONSEQUENCES OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Is not this concept of spiritual *communion* higher and truer than that of communication with those who have passed beyond the range of sight and hearing? Is there not an appeal here to the finest instincts of our being, to the deepest yearnings of the soul? To me

there is and I am debtor to it a hundred-fold. It may be profitable to reflect on what some rare souls have said of communion with the dead. Writing of his father, Thomas Carlyle said: "Perhaps my father, all that essentially was my father, is even now near me, with me. Both he and I are with God." John Henry Newman wrote: "I am learning more than hitherto to live in the presence of the dead—this is a gain which strange faces cannot take away."

Sir Robertson Nicoll in his "Reunion and Eternity" written while the Great War raged fiercely, has these thoughtful sentences—"Is it granted to us to have actual communion with the dead before the reunion? We have no distinct revelation, and yet 'in clear dream and solemn vision' much may be granted to the soul. Christ holds the dead by His right hand and His left hand holds ours. Is it possible that new currents of covenanting love may pass through Him from one to the other? How many can speak of sudden upliftings, touches, guidances, which seem to come from the ancient love?"

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote to Lady Byron in 1857: "I have got past the time when I feel that my heavenly friends are lost by going there. I feel them nearer, rather than farther off. So good-by dear, dear friend, and if you see morning in our Father's house before I do, carry my love to those that wait for me, and if I pass first, you will find me there, and we shall love each other for ever."

Dr. John Ker wrote to a very dear friend: "I have the firm belief that the future world is not cut off from this, but one with it—one through Him who is

Lord both of the living and the dead. Those who enter into it retain a personal and conscious existence near to Him, and He will find means of keeping up their connection, I do well believe, with that world which they have left. It is agreeable both to reason and Scripture that this should be so, and it is very consolatory to us to think that we and our dear friends shall still have real union."

Such testimony as this from men of letters and learning is good. But not alone the scholar and the saint, the woman in the home and the man in the crowd can also keep company with the elect of all time if they so desire. And what shall we say of the hearts bowed down that have been lifted up, supported by unseen helpers. Here is a letter written to Dr. Joseph Fort Newton during his ministry at the City Temple, London, and reproduced in his diary of England during war times. It is a most human piece of writing and it is much more—it is a confession of faith in the Higher Spiritualism—

"Dear Minister:

"Early in the war I lost my husband, and I was mad with grief. I had the children to bring up and no one to help me, so I just raged against God for taking my husband from my side and yet calling Himself good. Someone told me that God could be to me all that my husband was and more. And so I got into the way of defying God in my heart. 'Now and here,' I used to say, 'this is what I want and God can't give it to me.' After a while I came, somehow, to feel that God liked the honesty of it;

liked this downright telling Him all my needs, though I had no belief that He could help me. One day I had gone into the garden to gather some flowers, and suddenly I knew that my husband was there with me—just himself, only braver and stronger than he had ever been. I do not know how I knew; but I knew. There was no need of a medium, for I had found God myself, and, finding Him, I had found my husband too."

Surely here is something more comforting and deeply satisfying than recourse to darkened rooms and the crude and sometimes repellent paraphernalia of séances and curtained Cabinet. "Mystical experience," says Rufus M. Jones, "does not supply concrete information. It does not bring new finite facts, new items that can be used in a description of 'the scenery and circumstance' of the realm beyond our sense-horizons. It is the awareness of a Presence, the consciousness of a Beyond, the discovery as James put it that 'we are continuous with a More of the same quality, which is coöperative in us and in touch with us.' "

Think you the aerial wires
  Whisper more than spirits may?
Think you that our strong desires
  Touch no distance when we pray?
Think you that no wings are flying
  'Twixt the living and the dying?

It may be I should not close this study without including my own witness to this most intimate and personal of subjects. One has not lived very long or deeply until there breaks over him the billows of that oldest and newest of experiences—death in the home.

I cannot think of my own dead either as sleeping dreamlessly or inhabiting some far distant realm aloof and withdrawn from those of us who are still in the body. I can no more conceive of this than I can of God dwelling a million miles away, and that prayer to Him must perforce bridge so deep and awful a chasm. The companionship of those who are absent from this life of sight and touch and sound I continue to enjoy, but on the plane now where spirit meets with spirit and the sense of spiritual presence is strong and comforting.

Tender and blessed forever are the memories of a lovely daughter who in the mystic days of maidenhood

> Standing with reluctant feet
> Where the brook and river meet

went out from us through the old, old gateway of death. Lovers, friends, and comrades were we, and never more so than through the weeks when she bravely struggled to live and carry to fruition those earthly hopes that rightly were hers to cherish. When I reflect upon those days I find nowhere else such full-voicing of their wonder and blessedness as in the lines—

> The hours I spent with thee dear heart
> Are as a string of pearls to me,
> I count them over every one apart,
> My Rosary, My Rosary.

Yes, as a strand of the fairest and costliest of pearls were those hours with our little girl in the days of her heroic struggle for restoration to health. Came then the day of days when early on the morning of July 19, 1918, her wondering eyes closed on the scenes of

time and change. Never since has she been far from me nor is she now. I own the consciousness of her nearness and of companying with her. Sometimes amid the jostling crowds in the streets of a great city; sometimes as I walk over the quiet country fields or through the vocal woods; sometimes in the hush of the communion service in the place of worship; sometimes in the midst of that inner circle in the home which she so adorned—no matter where or when, I feel the winsome strength and know the restful radiance of her spiritual presence.

Thus I humbly live and gladly have my being in an abiding sense of the Eternal nearness and the unseen comradeship of a glorious company.

> You think them "out of reach," your dead?
> Nay, by my own dead, I deny
> Your "out of reach"— Be comforted:
> 'Tis not so far to die.

X

GOD MEASURING THE CHURCHES

How the Divine Spirit Appraises the Worth of a Christian Congregation and the Worshipers Therein

Rev. 11:1.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

X

GOD MEASURING THE CHURCHES

The heroic company for whom the book of Revelation was written understood its cryptic allusions. Through a period of dark and turbulent years the first century Church conducted meetings in secret; and by the aid of symbols, signs and passwords continued her mission in the face of bitter and deadly persecution. The visions, figures, and cryptograms of Revelation, which have been the source of almost endless controversy, brought warning and comfort to our brethren of the apostolic age. Assuming that this book was written primarily for the generation to which it was addressed, it does not follow that it contains no message for these latter days. In a secondary sense the book is freighted with much that is profitable for every generation.

Interpreters of various schools of theology agree that the allusion in Rev. 11:1 is to the church, its worship and conduct. God is represented as appraising His people and their worship. The apostle is bidden to discern the spiritual dimensions of the house of God.

First, he measures—

THE AREA OF THE TEMPLE

Yes, measure the temple, but not merely the physical area, for that were the least important. Some of the

most spiritual congregations have worshiped in small and unimpressive edifices. Trinity Chapel, Brighton, where Frederick W. Robertson preached those sermons which were heard the world around, is said to have sittings for only four hundred. Measure, then, not the spaciousness or seating capacity, but observe how much of the whole life of the worshiper is to be found in the house of God. Do the worshipers bring their all to church? What of the vision range of the minister and the office-bearers? Is the world objective of Jesus Christ kept constantly before the people, or are the ideals of the Temple provincial, narrow and mean? It has sometimes been urged—and with good intention—not to bring workaday memories or thoughts of vocation into the house of God. There is a sense in which such advice is good, but unless it be qualified or explained it may be misleading. Let men bring thoughts of shop, store, office and farm to the house of God; let women come with recollections of household duties, the training of children, the never ending round of domestic cares. Thus worshiping, it may be that both men and women will come to perceive the intimate relation between daily toil and the Spirit Divine, and be strengthened accordingly.

God is everywhere measuring the churches today. Are they big enough spiritually to serve and save this generation? Are they sufficiently maintained to minister to every need of the community? Are they feeding the emotions and starving the intellect? Are they providing for the adult life of the congregation and ignoring the children? Are the churches measuring up to this need of the whole of life and supplying richly

those great aids to faith that are necessary for the life abundant or, are they exclusive, snobbish and class-bound?

THE ALTAR

"Rise and measure the altar." The altar is the soul of the temple. The idea of sacrifice is as old as religion. When the artist paints primitive man at worship, he shows him kneeling before an altar on which a smoking sacrifice is laid. It is the altar that has given Christianity its supreme place among the world's religions. The communion of the Lord's Supper is more than a memorial; it is also a symbol. The broken bread and the fruit of the vine speak to us of His altar experience, but do they mirror in any way the altar in the lives of the worshipers? The basic law of the Christian life is the Cross. The very word "altar" is impressive; there is in it the idea of sacrificial service and gifts, the ministry of renunciation. A church is great in proportion to the size of its altar life. An individual Christian is a power with God and man only as the altar bulks largely in his thought and deed.

First century Christianity had no architecture worthy of name, no edifice even of the humbler kind. Its members met in upper rooms, caves of the earth, private homes—anywhere that they were able to come together and for the time be safe from the fire of the persecutors. The churches of that day boasted no "coffers" or material securities of any kind; they knew no organized life save of the slenderest, but they did possess the altar in a wondrous way. They shared their all with the humblest of earth, and they gave themselves

without reserve for a redeemed society. How prominently the altar was in St. Paul's life. How noble are his flaming words; when replying to the critics who questioned his apostolic credentials, he cried: "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear branded in my body the marks of Jesus." It was through the altar marks made by the lion which crunched his arm, that the body of David Livingstone was identified before it was buried with impressive honors in Westminster Abbey.

"Rise and measure the altar," is a solemn injunction to modern Christians. What is the altar life of the average congregation? What is the local church doing for the community? What service, what sacrifice, what ministry to the unfortunate, the despondent, the outcast, the poor? What of the altar in the lives of the members? Is it strong or faint? Is pride still dominating the rank and file of the Christian commonwealth? Is prejudice still swaying the multitude of believers? Is avarice and greed corroding the hearts of those who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus? Have we learned nothing new concerning sacrifice since the great war? Eighty thousand of America's youth gave their lives to make the world safe for women and little children. What of us who possess vigor, influence and talent, what are *we* giving? What of the altar experience on our part to make Christianity vital and fruitful the world over? Is the Cross only a symbol, a mere emblem to adorn a necklace or ornament for a watch fob? Yes, measure the altar and let us know the truth—even if it be an exposure of our meager accomplishments in the realm of the spiritual.

"AND THEM THAT WORSHIP THEREIN"

The measuring passes now from the temple and the altar to the individual. True, the individual has been included in both the measurement of the temple and the altar, but a more personal and individual appraisal must now be submitted to. God is about to take our measure in soul wealth. Have we learned to endure? How much patience do we possess? Is the forgiving spirit large with us? How long can we harbor a grudge? To what distance and inconvenience are we willing to go in order to right a wrong? Can we see the weak wronged without indignation? Can we exult in the downfall of an enemy? Do we try to be just to those whom we do not like? Can we bear this measuring rod of Almighty God without a sense of littleness? Are we growing in the great graces of the spirit? The questions are personal, searching, persistent, inescapable. "Lord is it I? Is it I? Is it I?"

There are a host of little Christians in the world, not children, but little-minded, little-hearted, little men and women who claim to follow the Great Christ. The mystery is profound. How can a man be little who really seeks to follow Jesus. No one can follow Him and remain small of soul, mean and narrow of mind —the process of following Jesus is an enlarging experience, the moving from lower to higher ground and a consequent expansion of vision power. If littleness still possess us and we call ourselves Christian, be sure we are not following, we have halted; unconsciously we have stopped and He has gone on.

By what standard does God measure the churches, the area of the temple, the altar and them that worship therein? A popular custom is to measure ourselves by others and observe with pride wherein our accomplishments are larger and our growth more considerable than neighbors, friends, fellow church members. A man looks about him for instance, and after the manner of a certain infamous Pharisee soliloquizes: "As compared with other folks I'm a pretty good kind of a Christian; I attend church more regularly than my neighbors next door; I can offer a better prayer in public than any man of the Official Board; I thank God I am a more efficient Churchman than anyone else in the congregation." That standard of measurement is an abomination; it is mean, niggardly and contemptible.

There are those, also, who while they scorn to measure themselves by others are quite ready to measure themselves by themselves. These well meaning folk look back over the years and see wherein they can trace a growth in spiritual things and thus contrasting present attainments with past, believe themselves to find ground for self-congratulation. This method of measuring is not so objectionable as the other, but it is faulty and inadequate. In II Cor. 10:12, the apostle alludes to Christians of that day who measured themselves by themselves, and he charged them with folly. The difficulty is that such measuring keeps one self-centered; it feeds pride, tickles vanity, chills enthusiasm, smothers the noblest impulses. Behold a more excellent way I show you:

JESUS THE STANDARD OF MEASUREMENT

God's manner of measuring us is in Jesus Christ, His son. Peter refers to Jesus as our example and bids us follow in His steps. Paul in a memorable passage enjoins the followers of Christ at Ephesus to strive toward high ideals: "Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The night of His betrayal Jesus gave to His disciples a new commandment, and bade them love one another even as He loved them. God, therefore, is measuring the temple, and the altar, and them that worship therein by and through His Son. Consider how fully His measurements fill the requirement of the text.

How wonderfully His spirit fills the temple, ministering to the whole life. Lo, His abundant provisions for the old, the middle aged, the young and the little children. No one is forgotten or overlooked; the outcast, the poor, the notorious sinner, the toiler, the housewife, the scholar, the peasant—all are objects of His love and consideration. The sympathies of Jesus, like the waters of some great ocean whose waves lap the shores of many continents, reach every experience of human life. He is everybody's Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. If lifted up in the thoughts and deeds of His followers, He will draw all men unto Himself.

In Jesus' life the altar was supreme. He came not to be ministered unto. The spirit of sacrifice in His life permeates the pages of the Gospels as Mary's oint-

ment filled the home of Simon the leper with its sweet fragrance. He was among the people as one who serveth. He set His face toward Jerusalem and offered Himself upon the high altar of the Cross for all mankind. Thus, he has become, as the author of the Hebrew Epistle has aptly phrased it—"our altar."

With what vastness of mind and affection does Jesus meet the yearnings of the soul that seeks Him; what amplitude in the spirit of Jesus. No petty prejudices, no sordid ambition, no greed for place or possession, warped or dwarfed His character. The words that fell from His lips were words of ocean-like breadth: "all," "whosoever," "everyone,"—these were the phrases oftenest upon His lips. How His abundant love, His whole-hearted forgiveness, His gracious dealings with publican and sinners rebukes the oft-times bigotry of some who claim Him as Lord and Master! Measured by this high standard, how small are even the most spiritual of men and women; compared with His sacrificial acts, how insignificant the most generous of the churches appear. In the deepest sense the spirit and the principles of Jesus are measureless. The religion of His day was that of the stated feast, the stipulated tithe, the arbitrary service, the formal and stereotyped Pharisaism. Jesus came with His large and lovely outlook upon life, His deep and penetrating insight into human nature. He taught the giving of good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. Instead of the measured mile standard He taught the nobility of the second mile; instead of stopping with forgiving one's enemy seven times, He multiplied that number by seventy, which was just another way of

saying, every time you have the opportunity, extend forgiveness fully and gladly. In the garden He left the majority of His disciples at the outer edge. He took Peter, James and John a little farther with Him; then, He Himself went farthest of all into the depths of the Gethsemane experience—a symbolic act.

My brethren, it is not possible to weigh or measure infinite love. No canvas is large enough for Jesus Christ. Men have been trying for centuries to summarize the character of Christ in lecture, essay, and biography; they have failed, or at the best, succeeded only partially. I recall the title of one of these multifarious books with Jesus as theme—a title of becoming modesty and singular good taste: "Jesus, An Unfinished Portrait." "Unfinished" is here rightly used. What artist, orator, preacher, essayist, philosopher, has appraised wholly that Great Soul, whether on canvas, in marble, or printed page? God be praised for so lofty an ideal, so perfect a standard, so sinless a life as He hath given unto the world in His beloved Son, Jesus—our "crystal Christ!"

Why do we follow, like a flock of sheep,
Tradition with a crook,
Or leave the vastness of the calling deep
To paddle in a brook;
When on the hills of sunrise stands the Lord—
Triumphant with a lifted flaming sword?

Why, when upon our lips the great new name
Waits eager to be said;
When cloven tongues of Pentecostal flame
Burn over every head:
Do we build Babel towers to the sky
From bricks and mortar, who have wings to fly?

XI

THE CHURCH IN THY HOUSE

A Brief for the Family Altar

Romans 16:5.

And salute the church that is in their house.

Colossians 4:15.

Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house.

Philemon 1:2.

And to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in thy house.

XI

THE CHURCH IN THY HOUSE

Thrice in the New Testament allusion is made to the Church in the homes of believers. The first of these references is to Acquila and Priscilla, that interesting couple who often entertained Paul and who taught the eloquent Apollos the "way of God more accurately." In the sixteenth chapter of Romans the Apostle closes his lengthy letter by citing a long list of distinguished fellow-workers. He calls them by name and salutes them in Christ Jesus. He heads this notable list with that eminent husband and wife, Acquila and Priscilla. He bears witness that they jeopardized their own lives for his. For such loyalty he expresses his deep gratitude and follows this with a salutation to "the church that is in their house." The second reference is to Colossians 4:15, where a certain Nymphia is remembered and "the Church in her house." The third is in the letter of Paul to Philemon, which consists of but a single chapter of twenty-five verses. In this brief epistle the Apostle paves the way for the restoration of a runaway servant, Onesimus by name. He beseeches Philemon to receive Onesimus no longer as a servant but more than a servant, a brother beloved. The salutation of this letter is a pen picture of a delightful Christian home of the first century. It is directed "to

Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker, and to Apphia our sister, and to Archippus our fellow-soldier and to the church in thy house." These three allusions to the church in the home are brimful of lessons for modern disciples of the Christ.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

What is the Church? Certainly it is not the building save in a figurative use of the word. The building where the church gathers for public worship is the House of God, or the "meeting house"; it is the church only in a symbolic sense. The Church is more than the edifice, greater than the structure, mightier than the cathedral. The Greek word for church means not "called out" as has sometimes been said, but simply "called together." It connotes a group of people coming together with a like purpose of mind and heart. In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." This is a fairly adequate description of a church. Wherever a group of people are gathered together in the name of Jesus Christ, there is a church, according to Matthew. The idea is developed by St. Paul who conceives of the church as the "body of Christ," a building of which Christ is the "chief Cornerstone," and also "the bride of Christ."

FAMILY WORSHIP AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

It is a matter of more than passing interest that in the dawn of the Christian era much of the worship centered in the home or family life. A study of the

New Testament, particularly Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, indicates how widespread this custom was. To be sure we have an explanation at hand and we offer it easily and naturally. We say there were no public meeting places where the early Christians could meet with safety and convenience, hence the use of their homes for this purpose. That was often the case. Sometimes they met in caves in the earth, as the author of the Hebrew Epistle intimates; sometimes in an upper room as at Troas, described in Acts the twentieth chapter; but oftenest the private residences of loyal disciples were used for the public services. It may be that the reference to "the Church in thy house," in the three texts cited is to the public gatherings in the private homes of followers of Jesus Christ. But the Christian families of that day had a Church in their home quite apart from the meeting of the brethren for public worship there. Those of "the way" were accustomed to gather together in the family circle in the name of Jesus. This can be shown from different angles, but from none other so significantly as that of the observance of the Lord's Supper.

An examination of Acts and the Epistles, leads us to believe that first century disciples observed the Lord's Supper in their homes and as a part of the daily meal. Bishop Lightfoot believed this practice continued for nearly a century. In the forty-sixth verse of the second chapter of Acts, after three thousand were obedient to the Gospel, we read that "day by day they continued with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home." Now the term "breaking bread" here is undoubtedly a reference to the Lord's Supper. In Acts

the twentieth chapter it is written that Paul met with the disciples at Troas and upon the first day of the week were gathered together to "break bread." Here again is the same expression referring to the Lord's Supper. Just as the Passover was a family feast and was presided over by the father who explained its meaning, so we have good reason to believe that in the beginnings of Christianity the Lord's Supper was similarly celebrated in the homes of the Christians, and for a considerable period observed every day. Gradually the public observance which came to be on the first day of the week superseded the family observance, although not entirely for many years, as we may believe.

It is a question whether by abandoning the family observance of the Lord's Supper we have not lost something helpful, desirable and thoroughly Christian. There is no reason why a Christian home might not at least upon occasions of family reunions, observe simply and helpfully the Lord's Supper, either at the beginning or the close of the family meal. The institution is a memorial. When Jesus instituted it He said, "This do in remembrance of Me," and St. Paul advised, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come." There is something tender, beautiful and uplifting in the simple memorial of the Lord's Supper when kept by the faithful, whether in small or large gatherings. Might not its observance in the home, occasionally at least, make for a growth in grace and knowledge of the Lord, and a binding of the family together in Him? I think it might.

THE DECLINE OF FAMILY WORSHIP A CALAMITY

The decline of family worship is an ominous thing —one that chills the heart of thoughtful Christians everywhere. Fifty years ago, according to reliable testimony, it was the exception to find a Christian home without family worship. Today it is the exceptional Christian home that observes daily devotions. In tens of thousands of church members' homes there is no definite recognition of God—not even grace at the table. Need it be a ten days' wonder when young people from such nominally Christian homes grow up into materialistic and worldly ways? In such homes the children see and hear much pertaining to business, society, parties, motion pictures, and the daily round of tangible things. But they observe no leaning on the Everlasting Arms, they hear no calling on God in prayer, they see no recognition of His bounty. Lo! the Bible rests unopened on the table or shelf; the hymnals are buried beneath sheafs of popular sheet music! Is it strange the mind of youth in such environment comes to think of God as present only at church; the Bible a book especially for the minister, and religion something incidental or apart from active, busy and successful life? If our children grow up with no sense of the intangible, who must bear the blame?

The restoration of the family altar is not an easy task. Perhaps it never can be set up just as it was fifty years ago. It is a question whether some forms of family worship once in use are desirable in this day. One would hesitate to prescribe any particular form of family worship adaptable to every home and in

every circumstance. The principal thing is a recognition of God. If by simple service at the table with readings from the Scripture or some aid to worship, in which the various members may participate and the minds of the family group turned Godward, then the great purpose has been achieved.

THE RAINBOWS THAT HALO THE FAMILY ALTAR

There is something exquisitely tender and withal ennobling that comes to a home by way of the family altar. In times of prosperity and joy it is good to praise God, to take Him into sweet and intimate account; to recognize Him gladly and with thanksgiving when the days are bright and happy and all is well. How lovely the strains of a favorite hymn at such a time; a song of jubilant praise! How blessed to gather about the piano and all join in the melody of the grand old hymn, "O Thou Fount of Every Blessing," or to lift the voices in the more modern but tuneful "Count Your Many Blessings, Name Them One by One." To remember God in the days of peace and plenitude—there is something wholesome and lovely in that. To set up a family altar in the very beginnings of the home, when life is young and love is new and the home is rainbowed with romance and glory—that is a divine transaction!

Then when the gray days come into the home, as come they will, and the burdens fall heavy, who can appraise adequately the ministry of the family altar? When sickness comes, when disappointment's blasts storm the domestic citadel, when sorrow and suffering rest like a pall over the family, how unspeakably great

and good is the altar in the home! And when death invades the charmed circle and the four corners of the house are smitten, then the habitual recognition of God becomes a veritable way unto heaven as in the dream of Jacob, and the home is transfigured into a Bethel with God over all! May it not be that a reason why so many homes are undone and frenzied in grief is because of the failure to recognize God daily? Perforce He seems afar off and aloof. But no stranger is He whom every day we worship and by the clear eye of faith behold! There is one verse in that justly famous hymn, "How Firm a Foundation" the truth of which can be realized only by practicing daily the presence of God.

> In every condition—in sickness, in health,
> In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth,
> At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea—
> As your days may demand, so your succor shall be.

WHY NOT A CHURCH IN OUR HOMES?

It is doubtful if any other impression is more lasting on youthful minds than definite devotional habits in the home. The now sadly neglected custom of "returning thanks" at the table before the meal is to multitudes of little children the first gesture of the family toward God and is a thing of reverence and of faith to a child's tender nature. The presence at stated intervals of a ministerial guest in the home has wrought wonders in after years, and when a guest room is best known to the children as "the minister's room," the token is indeed a fortunate and favorable one.

A noble Christian woman whose life has blessed thousands never ceased to cherish the memory of a very great treasure in her home. It happened that the silver Communion service of the Church was kept in that home; the tankard, the goblets, and the plates. The bread was made from "the finest of wheat," the red wine was pressed from the "choicest of grapes"—these too were prepared in that home and the preparation was a kind of Sacrament. The joy and pride her father and mother took in giving their best to the care of the Communion Service, and the preparing of the loaf and fruit of the vine, became a holy memory to this little girl who watched it all with wondering eyes. Is it a mystery or surprising to know that when that little girl grew to womanhood and went as a bride to grace her own home, it was to bring to the hearth-stone the ineffable glory of spiritual ideals?

Dr. Russell H. Conwell, the distinguished Baptist minister and lecturer, says that in his opinion the greatest hour in a young man's life is the hour when he leads his bride into the home he has prepared for her, and as the two pass over the threshold the young man turns to her and exclaims: "This, my beloved, is our home, I prepared it for thee; I earned it for thee in the sweat of my brow. Pass thou in and reign here Queen of my heart and house." I can think of only one hour greater than this and that is the hour when a young couple begin their wedded life with prayer together for God's blessing to attend them in the wonder and glory of home making.

At the time of the terrible influenza scourge in 1918, I made a call in a home which had for guest the grand-

mother who resided in a distant State. This lovely woman, whose beautiful white hair was a crown of glory, proudly showed me a group picture of her oldest son's family. There were three attractive children, and the five made as blessed a circle as one could wish to see. The grandmother told me that that family was joyously Christian. Their home life was simply and delightfully devotional. They had a Church in their house. When the epidemic closed the Church in the little town where they held membership it deprived them of *public* worship only. On Sunday morning the five enjoyed a period of prayer and praise. The father took charge; the mother led in prayer; the oldest of the children read aloud from the Psalms; another offered prayer, and they all sang from the Hymnals. Each member of the family took part and the service, while brief, was impressive and joyful throughout.

> Compared with this, how poor religion's pride
> In all the pomp of method and of art,
> When men display to congregations wide,
> Devotion's every grace except the heart!
> The power incensed, the pageant will desert
> The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
> But, haply in some cottage far apart,
> Will hear well pleased, the language of the Soul,
> And in His book of life the inmates poor enroll.

My brethren, we should have a church in our homes! The gatherings in the family circle should, at least once a day, be called in the name of Jesus, and for the purpose of recognizing Our Heavenly Father. If we have not yet set up some form of the family altar, let us agree to establish it now. If the altar was at one

time in our homes but has been neglected and ignored, let us resolve to reëtablish it at once. The House of God has its inspiring and fruitful place in the life of the world. Public worship cannot be superseded or replaced entirely by worship in the home. We have need for both; moreover, we can have both.

XII

THE LORD'S LEADING

A Meditation on a Memorable Hymn

Psalm 23.

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside still waters.
He restoreth my soul;
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.

XII

THE LORD'S LEADING

A MEDITATION ON A MEMORABLE HYMN

"He Leadeth Me."—*Psalm* 23:2.

The Psalms of Israel have been called "The Songs of a thousand years." Subsequent to the book of Law, the devout Jew loved the Psalter; and along side of his Bible the Christian reverently places his hymn book. How impoverished the world would be without its Christian hymns! It is impossible to say which has accomplished the most good, the preaching or the singing of the gospel. Christianity is preëminently a singing religion. It is doubtful if there is a great truth of the Christian faith that is not associated in our minds with some impressive hymn.
Is it God's love for the world as manifested in His great Gift?

> O Love Divine, that stooped to share
> Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear?

Is it the atonement?

> There is a green hill far away,
> Without a city wall:
> Where the dear Lord was crucified,
> Who died to save us all.

Is it the missionary passion?

> Bear the news to every land,
> Climb the steeps and cross the wave.
> Onward, 'tis the Lord's command,
> Jesus saves, Jesus saves.

Is it comfort for the bereaved heart?

> Come, ye disconsolate, where'er you languish;
> Come, at the shrine of God fervently kneel;
> Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish,
> Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Is it submission and resignation to God's will?

> My Saviour, as thou wilt—
> O may thy will be mine!
> Into thy hand of love
> I would my all resign.

Is it prayer?

> Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer.
> That calls me from a world of care.

Whatever the aspect of Christian truth, there is a hymn to extol it, a stanza to glorify it, a verse to memorialize it. From the many great hymns, one such is presented here for our study and profit. It is a hymn that has for its imagery the lovely pastoral metaphor of the most familiar of all the Psalms—the twenty-third; a hymn known to millions by the title "He Leadeth Me."

The hymn was written by Professor J. H. Gilmore, who was born in Boston April 29, 1834, and died at Rochester, New York, in 1919. He composed the hymn in 1862 in the very darkest period of the Civil War. The writing of it was purely an inspiration. Mr. Gilmore was at that time acting as supply in the

pulpit of the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia. One of his duties was to give a somewhat extended talk at the mid-week Prayer service. He commenced a series of expositions of the twenty-third Psalm, but in the first address he got no further than the words, "He Leadeth Me." That night he saw a depth of meaning in those words that he had never seen before. He spoke for half an hour on the one clause, "He Leadeth Me." After the meeting was over, Mr. Gilmore went to the home of a member of the church, accompanied by a number of friends who had attended the meeting. The little company sat up until late talking about the blessed assurance of Divine leadership. During the conversation Mr. Gilmore took out his pencil and wrote on the back of an envelope "He Leadeth Me," just as it stands today, with one exception; the stanzas as originally written were of six lines. His wife sent the poem to the *Watchman and Reflector,* a leading religious journal of that day. William B. Bradbury, the composer, read the verses and at once recognized their merit. He took two lines off each stanza and added two others to make the chorus and set the words to music. From the very first the words and tune seemed inseparable. To quote a competent critic, "Few hymn composers have so exactly caught the tone and spirit of their texts as Bradbury did when he vocalized the gliding measures of 'He Leadeth Me.' "

A study of this memorable hymn reveals the fact that the exalted theme is developed, and enriched, stanza by stanza, reaching "A glorious summit" in the fourth and last.

The hymn rightly opens with the transcendent thought that the leading is of the Lord.

> He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
> O words with Heavenly comfort fraught!
> Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
> Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Thus the first line fixes the mind on Divine leadership and bids the weary soul rest securely in God. The Lord's leading is a favorite theme of the Bible writers, and the idea is presented and expanded under various figures. In Exodus 3:2 it is written "And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way, and by night by a pillar of fire to give them light." John Henry Newman employs felicitously the familiar and eloquent figure in his "Lead kindly Light! amid th' encircling gloom." The metaphor is impressive even though it is impersonal and the thought somewhat abstract. The twenty-third Psalm portrays the Lord's leading under the similitude of the Oriental shepherd who knows his sheep by name and goes before them providing green pastures and ample protection against their natural enemies. The imagery is attractive even to us moderns, and "thy rod and thy staff" a precious and comforting assurance. In this hymn, however, the Leader is contemplated not wholly as a shepherd, but as the Heavenly Father. The idea is fuller and farther advanced than the conception of God as revealed in the Old Testament. There God is first revealed as Creator with the idea of force uppermost, then as Ruler of the universe with the idea of law as supreme, and finally through the prophets of Israel as an Infinite Personality, a God of

justice, purity and righteousness. The thought here is of Christ who taught us by word and deed that the Heavenly Father knows and cares, and is not willing that the least of His children should perish.

"'Tis God's hand that leadeth." Surely these are words with Heavenly comfort fraught, words that have brought peace and comfort to many a troubled soul. When President Garfield was lying on a bed of suffering from which he was not to rise, he heard his wife singing in an adjoining room, the words "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah!" As he listened, the wan face of the stricken president lighted up radiantly, and to a watcher by his bedside he exclaimed, "Isn't it beautiful, isn't it full of comfort?" Some years ago Rudyard Kipling was lying at the point of death in a New York hospital and all hope of his recovery had been abandoned. His nurse asked him with tender solicitude if there was anything he wanted. "Yes," he replied feebly, "I want, I want my Heavenly Father." When Alexander Campbell was dying, his wife bending over him, whispered: "The blessed Savior will go with you all the way." Mr. Campbell opened his eyes and exclaimed: "That He will, that He will." Oh, blessed, thrice blessed is the man or woman who is able to say in deep conviction and with unfaltering faith, "He Leadeth Me."

In the second stanza the thought is of life's changing scenes through which the Unchanging Leader leads on.

Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters still, o'er troubled sea
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

This stanza is the most poetic of the four. The antithesis is striking and the phrases set in opposition were chosen with discrimination and an eye to form and color. What could be lovelier than "Eden's bowers"? The imagination fashions a garden of delight where flowers bloom in profusion amid a tangle of vine and leaf; a lovely spot where soft and fragrant breezes blow and the songs of birds fill the air with melody of the wildwood; and over all the sunlight pours a golden flood. Side by side with this Edenic scene is another and of "deepest gloom." The pæon has become a threnody, mirth gives place to lamentation, there is experience of barren gain and bitter loss. "By waters still"; here the poet borrows from the shepherd's Psalm again. The scene is one of serenity, of pastoral beauty, and with peace brooding over all. "Troubled sea"; old ocean in the grip of a raging storm, breakers thundering against the rock-bound coast, a ship in distress, and sailors straining their eyes through the darkness searching vainly for a harbor light. Such are the diverse and different scenes suggested by these striking phrases.

The strong and vivid contrasts of this stanza are fully warranted by the facts of life. The four seasons of the year mirror the seasons of the soul, and the varied experiences that distinguish our days. Verily we spend our years as a tale that is told, and no tale is worth the telling that does not involve life's endless variations. Like the changing landscape, so are our lives. The "Heaven kissing hill," the desert plain, the verdant meadow, and the dark forest of hidden peril, God has joined together the light and the shadow.

Both are very real; both are parts of an infinite plan and necessary to man's best growth. Moreover change and decay lose their terror in the presence of a Guide who changeth not, and One able to conduct us through the "valley of the shadow." Mr. Moody delighted to tell of a man who placed the inscription "God is Love" on a weathervane and in letters large enough to be read by passers-by. When someone chided the man with irreverence, saying, "Do you mean to publish to the world the belief that God is as fickle as the wind?" He answered, "No, not at all, I want people to know that I believe that God is love whichever way the wind blows."

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Better the changing scene and a Changeless Leader than bowers of perennial beauty and no one to guide us into the abundant life of the spirit. St. Paul was persuaded "That neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depths, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." So amid the varying scenes from "Eden's bowers" to "deepest gloom," and "by waters still" and "o'er troubled sea," our God leads us on.

In the third stanza the Leader becomes the Great Companion and goeth not ahead of us but at our side.

> Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
> Nor ever murmur or repine,
> Content, whatever lot I see,
> Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

In the first and second stanzas, God's hand steadies and guides. Here the tender and comforting thought is that He holds the hands of His child, companying with him in blessed comradeship. It is not necessary to explain so beautiful an allusion; the parental heart understands it thoroughly. Whoever has felt the clasp of a little hand in which there was trust and perfect confidence, understands the full import of the line "Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine."

A distinguished American minister used to tell with deep emotion an incident which occurred when he and his little seven-year-old son were taking a trip together. They occupied the same seat on the train, the lad sitting next to the window, his face pressed against the glass watching the flying landscape; the father next the aisle reading a magazine. Suddenly without warning, the train plunged into a tunnel blotting out the daylight instantly. Quickly the little fellow pressed his father's side, felt for his hand, and having found it, contentedly held it until the tunnel was passed and the darkness ended. The pith of this story is not that it is unusual but that it is a touching instance of a love and trust which every parent knows.

The idea of companionship is dominant in this stanza and the Leader is contemplated not as going before but *with* us and at our side. To endure as seeing Him who is invisible is to walk with the Great Companion. The presence of a fourth Person in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is more than an episode of Old Testament history. It is a Divine symbol, a token of "The Comrade in White." The consciousness of Divine Companionship stoutened the

heart of Peter in prison, imparted courage to Paul in the shipwreck that befell him on his voyage to Rome, supplied patience to Livingstone in darkest Africa, and nourished the faith of Gordon at Khartoum. Jesus is here. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" is the most precious promise our Lord uttered.

The fourth and final stanza carries the thought of the Lord's leading to the last lap of the journey.

> And when my task on earth is done,
> When by Thy grace the victory's won,
> E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
> Since God through Jordan leadeth me.

There is a certain somberness in the figure with which the hymn closes. Death is pictured under the similitude of a river with waters swollen and cold. The metaphor is a favorite with hymn writers generally, and its origin is easily traced. The river Jordan was the natural barrier between the children of Israel and the land flowing with milk and honey. The one-time popular "On Jordan's Stormy Banks" identifies the Promised Land with the Heavenly Home, the river of death "lying darkly between." John Bunyan in his vivid description of Christian and Hopeful struggling with the river and then gaining at last the shining shore, has had much to do in popularizing the figure. In "My Faith Looks Up to Thee" occurs the dismal line "death's cold sullen stream" and in another and a lesser known hymn the refrain is "No, the waters will not chill me, no the waters will not chill me, when I go down to die." One prefers of all the hymns of this character, "Shall we gather at the river" with its

tender line "the beautiful, the beautiful river." Yes, "beautiful," but only so because One goeth with us Who is able to breast the wave.

In the light of Christ's teaching the river of death loses its terror and becomes "Such a tide as moving seems asleep, too full for sound or foam." Our Great Companion goes with us all the way. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, avers that by the grace of God, Christ tasted death for every man. He went down into the grave but it was not able to hold Him. It is as though He spoke to us saying, "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

Thus beginning with the strong affirmation that it is the Lord who leads, then vividly contrasting the changing scenes of this life through which the Changeless Leader leads, complete dependence upon the Great Companion is then acknowledged, and with a strain of victory the last lap of the journey is reached with the Lord still leading us into the unknown future. Listen now to this hymn as it moves in majestic rhythm like a noble river approaching the ocean and "turns again home."

He leadeth me, O blessed thought,
O words with Heavenly comfort fraught!
What'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Sometimes mid scenes of deepest gloom,
Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
By waters still, o'er troubled sea—
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur or repine,
Content, whatever lot I see.
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done,
When by Thy grace the victory's won,
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
Since God through Jordan leadeth me.

The power of this hymn and its influence over the lives of men and women could be illustrated by many touching incidents. It has been the favorite hymn of hosts of Christian people; it has been sung at thousands of funeral services; it has been read by many a shut-in with tear-dimmed eyes, and a great hope welling in the heart. Amid the awful suffering and sorrow of the Armenian massacres, this hymn brought a ministry of comfort and of healing. A young woman missionary of the American Board in Turkey, saw the departure of hundreds of Armenians going into exile, and wrote the heart-rending description to an American friend. The poor persecuted Armenians were going to their death and they knew it. They could have purchased prolongation of life and freedom if they had denied their Lord; but that they never considered for a moment. The scene of their deportation was melting in the extreme, yet the poor tortured and loyal souls praised God and glorified the name of His Son. Tears streamed down the faces of the men and women who were giving up their all for their faith. They clasped the hands of the Missionaries and prayed and wept over them. They all met in one final service of prayer and reading of the Scriptures, and at its close they raised their voices in the hymn "He Leadeth Me,"

and from the singing of these words went out and on to death and glory.

"He Leadeth Me" is precious to me because it was the favorite of a beloved kinsman to whom I owe an unpayable debt. My dear kinsman was not a musician and his singing voice was not strong, but he was a sincere and loyal Christian and he loved the great hymns of the church. At service on Lord's day morning this was one of the few hymns in which he invariably joined. He was particularly fond of the chorus. As he went about his work he loved to sing this hymn softly and over and over again. Sometimes he sang it in the summer twilight sitting under the trees in front of the house, at peace with God and man. Sometimes he sang the first stanza and the chorus in the sitting-room when the long winter nights were on and the anthracite stove glowed like a ball of fire. There are times when I fancy I can still hear him singing the chorus of "He Leadeth Me"; singing it soft and low; singing it out of an unshaken faith and a hope which anchored his soul within the Veil; singing it now in a nobler, sweeter strain, amidst the glory of the Father's Home and those loved long since and lost a while.

He leadeth me, He leadeth me;
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful follower I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me.

XIII

THE PEACE CHRIST GIVES

The Nature of Jesus' Peace, and How and Why It Differs from the World's Peace

John 16:33.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

XIII

THE PEACE CHRIST GIVES

Was there ever a stranger peace conference than that one of the upper room in Jerusalem nineteen centuries ago? How far removed and how different this assembly from those famous peace conferences where the victors in battle have dictated terms to the conquered foe. Such councils have usually met in palatial rooms flanked by the spectacle of earthly power and glory. Pomp and pageantry have always been in evidence when nations have assumed the rôle of peace-making. How difficult it is for peace to emerge from an atmosphere of war. Fuss and feathers smother; sword and saber intimidate; the kingdom of peace cometh not by violence.

Gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem was a group of men, plain, simple men, and with them their Teacher, Companion and Friend met together for the last time ere the great storm broke. The shadows were long and deep in that room, and they fell darkly across the little company who for nearly three years had been partakers of a great privilege. These men were anxious now and nervous. They were filled with apprehension of impending peril. The signs and tokens were ominous; a tragedy seemed confronting them, but just when and how and where, they knew not. Yet

there was one in that room upon whom no shadow fell. He was calm, clear-eyed, composed and serene. He sat there talking with His friends, simply, tenderly, intimately. Surely no man ever spoke as Jesus spoke that night in the upper room. Such a conversation there never was before or since, and toward its close Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me you might have peace."

What things? Why the great utterances that had preceded this statement. They are many of them and they distinguish His conversation that last night as stars of the first magnitude distinguish the Heavens. Listen to the music of these words:

> Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.
>
> Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.
>
> Ye are my friends, if you do the things which I command you.
>
> If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.
>
> This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.
>
> Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

JESUS' PEACE IS INWARD REST

Jesus' phrase "My peace" is distinctly interesting and thought-inciting. What is the peace which He

intimates is unlike the peace the world gives? I daresay that most of us are mistaken as to the nature of Jesus' peace. When we think of His peaceful life, is it to dream that His days and years were such, say, as the poet Wordsworth spent in the lovely lake region of England, quietly, serenely? If we have so thought we are in error. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For at least three years, the years of His public ministry, Jesus lived amidst untoward conditions and in almost constant controversy and opposition. He was subject to numerous disturbing and disagreeable experiences. His own family were unsympathetic with His mission. His kinsmen made His work more difficult and were critical of much that He said and did. He was never free from the inconveniences of poverty. After His public ministry began, He seems never to have known the comforts of a home which He might call His own and to which He might retire for rest and reflection. His oft-quoted words—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head"—were not poetry or rhetorical figure, but soberest truth. The leading Churchmen of His day, who should have been His friends and supporters, were His bitterest enemies. They regarded Him as a heretic, an impostor, and a dangerous fellow-countryman. His was the heart-breaking experience to have the good that He did attributed to the power of evil. His chosen disciples gave Him a great deal of trouble, often disappointed Him, sometimes embarrassed Him and made His rugged way more rugged still.

Yet, despite the annoyances, the turmoil, and the

strife in which Jesus lived, the peace that passeth all understanding reigned in His heart. However turbulent His surroundings, inwardly He was at repose. It was Jesus' inner peace that made Him conqueror of outward unrest. He lived in harmony with the Father's will, and His conscience was as untroubled as the placid surface of a mountain lake when the wind has died down and a calm settles over all. No memories of a misspent youth rose up to haunt Him, no feeling of remorse or sorrow of sin darkened the mirror of His spotless life. Thus He moved amidst the distractions, the disappointments, the conflicts and controversies of His day, calm, serene, self-possessed, at peace with God. The peace of Jesus, therefore, was an inward experience, not an outward environment, certainly not freedom from the burdens of life. The way He took was often painful, but His walk was one whose steps were in perfect alignment with the will of the Heavenly Father.

THE WORLD'S PEACE IS OUTWARD CALM

The world in general regards peace as an end, rather than a means. It conceives peace to be the cessation of war, stoppage of conflict, restoration of law and order. This is desirable, to be sure, but the bitter truth is that real peace is not attainable by mere outward adjustment. Moreover, peace, enduring peace, is not only the ending of one order that has been weighed in the balance and found wanting, it is the beginning of a new and better order in which justice, righteousness and brotherhood are to prevail. Alas! it is only too true that we are all to a greater or lesser degree affected

with the worldly idea of peace. We stress outward things, and look for the coming of the Kingdom through exterior processes. The world as yet has failed to make a lasting peace. Time and time again great peace councils have, by the very terms of peace the victor sought to impose, sown the seeds of future wars.

> Great Captains with their guns and drums,
> Disturb our judgment for the hour.
> But at last silence comes—

Yes, silence comes, and just about the time when sober reflection and careful judgment is replacing the fever and excitement of war, great captains with their guns and drums disturb our judgment again;—disturb it with the roar of cannon and the loosing of the dogs of war upon a helpless society. The world professes to love peace, brotherhood and justice, but conquerors and victors are quick to make sure that the balance of power is on their side, and that armies and navies big enough to keep the peace are in training and ready for action.

Few of us are free from the opinion that outside favorable conditions are able to produce of themselves inward repose. We think, for instance, that the possession of sufficient wealth to protect us from the annoyances and anxieties attendant on meager incomes and heavy outlays would produce a peace, where now there is only distraction and anxiety. That it might help accomplish this is freely granted, that society as a whole ought to be protected from the fear of poverty as well as the handicap of it is likewise granted. Yet, even so, the most generous provisions, the most ample

safeguarding of this kind cannot of itself produce inward calm. There are many living amid physical conditions that are favorable to rest, recreation and wide travel who are inwardly in a constant state of turbulency, turmoil, and strife. Tribulations, however, of one kind or another await the sons of men everywhere, and wait us despite wealth, genius, and even godly living. These tribulations are inescapable, but they are conquerable. Jesus overcame them, and the same power that enabled Him to overcome, He assures us, will enable us to overcome. It is the inner peace that counts. Given the inner peace and the ideals and teachings of Jesus, and the result is a peace such as the world cannot give because the world has it not.

Why is it that society is slow to accept Christ's peace? Why is it that individuals are prone to turn elsewhere for power, only to meet disappointment? Is it because we do not understand the nature of His peace? Possibly. But a better explanation is that we are not willing to receive His peace on the simple terms He offers it. It is not true that the peace of God is given without conditions, even though it be freely given and given to all men. "These things have I spoken that in me you might have peace." Ah, yes, the things spoken in that conversation at the table, we must not forget them. They are all-important, they are fundamental. Summarized, these things are as follows—"Abide in Me." Let "My words abide in you." "Love one another even as I have loved you." "Keep My commandments." "Bear much fruit." "Bear witness." "Ask and ye shall receive." "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you."

"Be of good cheer." The peace of Jesus Christ is an inward rest, but it is more, it is a way of life in which love, justice, mercy, forgiveness, find radiant demonstration.

"When he called upon men to follow him, to share his baptism and drink his cup," says W. E. Orchard, "He was not mocking them with impossible ideals. He was asking them to be as he was, to live for the same ends, to undertake the same task. Jesus invited men to his ethical and spiritual level. The blunting of this call by the declaration that Jesus can never be followed by mortal men is responsible for the low state of Christian discipleship."

Candor compels the admission that the world's idea of peace is still influential in the churches. Here too, the emphasis is largely on outward conformity, the dependence on ecclesiastical and doctrinal regularity. These have been only too often the weapons of Christendom to enforce uniformity and promote appearance of solidarity. The various denominations, after the fashion of nations, have their "war parties," their "jingoes" and "dollar diplomacy." These powerful elements are intent on preserving traditional ideas and time-worn methods, by recourse to sectarian armament and threat of excommunication or brand of heresy and stigma of unorthodoxy. Thus has the cause of Jesus' peace been betrayed oft-times in the house of the Master. Sectarian disarmament must take place among the denominations before the Church can ever have an influential voice and great prestige in the Peace Councils of the world.

JESUS BESTOWS HIS PEACE DIFFERENTLY FROM THE WORLD

The world is partial, prejudiced and class-conscious in its gift of peace. It exalts some by pulling down others. It enriches a few by impoverishing many. Jesus gives His peace to all who will accept Him. He draws no circles, builds no walls, makes no limitations as to caste, color, or character. His gracious invitation to peace, power and plenty is inclusive and all-encompassing. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus' gift of peace is Himself. He had nothing to give the world save Himself, and greater gift than self no one can give. The world balks at giving self, it bestows favors, offices, emoluments. Jesus gave Himself in His death on the cross. Dying there amid darkness and degradation He made peace, individual peace, possible for the least and lowliest of earth. There are many theories of the atonement, and followers of Christ will never be agreed upon any one of these theories, but the glorious fact of the atonement is not disputable or under debate or question. Says St. Paul—"He is our peace." By His death there on that central cross Jesus led the way for enduring peace, not only between God and man, but between man and man. The peace councils of the world have not yet learned the way of the cross. Their way is still the

way of the sword and that is the way of death and darkness and suffering.

Jesus' gift of Himself is also in life, the life of His free and victorious Spirit through which He abides in every heart which accords Him room. Most gifts lose sooner or later their power to thrill, to interest, to please, but not so this gift of Christ given freely to everyone who will receive Him. Whoso possesses the world's peace will thirst again, but whoso possesses the peace of Christ will never know the necessity for anything better or more satisfying. His is the peace that passes all understanding because of its exquisitely fine quality, its lastingness and satisfying nature.

How impoverished the centuries would be if there were taken from them the lives of many humble and lowly who were filled with the peace of Jesus Christ. As for the mighty men who led in world-movements and helped to change the course of history for the better, Christ's peace ruled their lives. St. Paul knew that peace and it enabled him to establish the Christian faith in hostile communities, testify before kings and queens, and face lion-heartedly brutal mobs bent on putting him to death. Martin Luther knew this peace of Christ and amidst the wildest storms of controversy he stood undaunted and persevering in his mighty tasks. Abraham Lincoln possessed this peace and it taught him patience and kept him calm and sweet when rancor and contumely swirled around him as furious floods swirl around a massive pier.

Oh, ye hosts who know only the world's peace! Go get ye to the upper room and there learn the peace that is pure, just and holy—the peace that Christ gives to

all; the peace for which a war-scourged world waits. For without His peace all plans and programs of disarmament will be but as some fair dream which vanishes with the morning and cannot be recalled.

XIV

OTHER SHEEP

An Attempt to Appraise the Scattered Flock of God at Their Value in the Good Shepherd's Sight

John 10:16.

Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

XIV

OTHER SHEEP

If one were to take a pen and designate with a tiny star every reference in the Holy Scriptures to sheep and shepherds, the result would be an "inky way" from Genesis to Revelation; with the stars most multitudinous in portions of the Psalms, parts of the Prophecies, and throughout the Gospels. The land of the Bible is the shepherd's own country where he lives with his flock, knows them by name, protects them, sustains them, and defends them from their natural enemies. One of the favorite names of the Old Testament is Rachel, which means "ewe," and the phrase "Shepherd of Israel" as applied to Jehovah is exquisite poetry. The Shepherd's Psalm is a most appropriate name for the twenty-third Psalm and the pastoral scene it pictures is enchanting: the green pastures, the still waters, the valley of the shadow, the rod and the staff, the overflowing cup, the safety and comfort of the fold, who can forget the strength and beauty of such imagery?

Jesus was fond of this Shepherd figure and some of his notable parables are interwoven with pastoral imagery. It is an interesting fact, and not without its pathos, that as the shadows of the end fell upon His disciples, the Old Testament figure of the sheep of

God's pasture was often in His mind and on His lips. Thus, He comforted His disciples with the words, "Fear not little flock," and in the time of imminent peril in the last winter of His life He spoke the words which John has recorded for us in the tenth chapter of his Gospel. Throughout the eighteen verses Jesus varies the figure and enforces it in several ways. He speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd and His followers as His sheep. He requires of them obedience and trust; He promises that no one shall snatch them from out His hands. He makes it His concern to know them and to know the Father. From the thought of the sheep He passes to that of the sheepfold, of which He said He Himself is the door, and from the fold He proceeds to describe the flock with the one shepherd. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

"OTHER SHEEP I HAVE WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD"

This utterance of Jesus must have startled His hearers. "This fold" is of course the Jewish faith, and to the zealous Jew all others were outside the fold. It is difficult for us to understand the intense and bitter prejudice of the Jews of Jesus' day toward all others of alien faith and race. In their eyes all who were not children of Abraham were "Gentiles," "Heathen," "dogs," and "wolves." They believed themselves to be the especial objects of God's favor and the only ones who were to be the beneficiaries of His love and forgiveness. So extreme and fanatical were some of the Pharisaical groups that such a sentiment as this has

come down to us: "The spittle of a Jew is more precious in the sight of Jehovah than the life blood of a heathen." Prejudice shut out from Israel all foreign culture; no one could hope for eternal life who read the books of other nations.

We stand aghast at such bigotry and yet withal there is not a religious body anywhere without some adherents who believe themselves to be the elect of God, and all others outside the true fold. It were well if we possessed a sense of humor and could see how very ludicrous some of our prejudices are. John B. Gough used to delight to tell a story of a minister who was preaching in Boston when he saw the Governor of the state coming up the aisle. Immediately he began to stammer and finally said: "I see the Governor coming in and I know you will want to hear an exhortation from him and I think I had better stop." Whereupon one of the old officials leaped up from a front seat and said, "I insist upon your going on with your sermon, Sir, you ought not to be embarrassed by the Governor's coming in. We are all worms! All worms! Nothing but worms!" This interruption stirred the minister deeply and he replied heatedly, "Sir, I would have you to understand that there is a difference in worms." Yes, the difference—always the difference between people, races, religions—the *difference,*—ah, that's the rub! Why stress the difference?

If we are to be Christian we shall have to get away from the belief that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian"; that the only real white man is the Anglo-Saxon; that "the negro is a beast"; that the Japanese are all dishonest; that the Chinese are "a yellow peril";

that the Jew is conspiring to dominate the world and lord it over all. If the Jew's prejudice toward the Christian has been bitter and long-standing, then so has the prejudice of the Gentile toward the Jew been terrible in intensity and almost unaccountable in persistence. Only recently the Jew has been the object of a new outburst of fury; the controversy waxes hot and the ancient feud continues. Racial pride and arrogance is widespread and deep-rooted. We Americans of all people should be able to take a broad and charitable attitude toward peoples of alien birth, but alas, prejudice toward the "foreigner" in America is not the exception but the general rule. The eccentricities of genius of whatever race dispose us to be tolerant, even indulgent, but the same traits in a peddler, an organ grinder, or proprietor of a fruit stand, move us to fresh diatribes against the Italian, the Greek, the Pole. We need to take to heart the admonition of Professor Steiner: "Don't let one smell of garlic put a whole army of Christians to flight."

"Other sheep . . . not of this fold." That is to say, Jesus has sheep not in the recognized fold. Interpreting this statement in the light of His ministry, it can only mean that all who seek after God and walk in such light as they have are His sheep, and eventually He will bring them all to Himself. When it became known to Peter that the Gentiles were included in the gracious invitation of Christ, he said, "Of the truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him." Moreover, Paul, in Romans 3:14, affirms that those not having the law

are a law unto themselves. "Other sheep!"—How these words so true, so mellow of spirit, ought to enlarge the horizon of our souls. The field is the world. All the tribes, tongues and peoples come within the scope of God's great love. He taught us not to think meanly of any man or woman, whether black or white or yellow, and of whatever social stratum. He taught us to look out upon the masses of humanity as objects of God's love and of the ministrations of all those who have accepted the Christ.

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
  Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice,
  Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
  Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
  Is most wonderfully kind.

"THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY SHALL HEAR MY VOICE"

It is the will of our Lord that His other sheep which are not of the fold be brought to Him, that they may hear His voice and own His shepherdship. The method of the bringing of Christ's other sheep is of the utmost importance. When Jesus spoke these words, the thought of the approaching cross must have been in His mind. Aye, that Cross would be the means of bringing hosts upon hosts to know the Good Shepherd and to follow whithersoever He should lead. In the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel it is recorded that certain Greeks sought out Philip and asked him,

saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." When this request was made known to the Master He was profoundly moved; perhaps He saw in that request the first fruits of the coming of all nationalities to own Him Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Then it was that He uttered that notable prediction: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."

The "other sheep" are to be brought unto the shepherd by human instrumentalities. This is the Divine plan. Obedience to this command converts the church into a missionary enterprise. Jesus first sent out the twelve disciples; then the seventy; and just before His Ascension He gave the church its great commission, saying, "Go, teach all nations." The very charter of the church is its commission to make other disciples. The book of Acts is full of power and glory and extraordinary triumphs because it is a record of the early church at work carrying out the commission. If Christendom had kept this great goal in view and regarded the church as a means, not as an end,—in place of the denominational rivalries, senseless controversies, and costly competitions,—this great missionary spirit would have swept over the peoples of other nations with power and wonder and saving grace, and the great World War would have been an impossibility.

"Other sheep." Does this obligation rest lightly or heavily upon the churches? Truth compels the answer that a host are not conscious of such an obligation. For it is to the churches that we must look, both for the material resources and the dedicated life, and in both instances the supply is meager. The great body of Christians give about thirty-two cents a year per

capita for the bringing of these other sheep to know the Good Shepherd. Young men for the ministry are difficult to find, the most capable young manhood of our churches is answering the call of the commercial world and not of the mission field or definite Christian leadership. There are great churches in America with memberships running into the thousands, worshiping in magnificent temples, who have not given to the ministry or the mission field a young man or woman for many a year. Somehow this obligation of other sheep does not rest upon us as it rested upon Jesus. He wept over Jerusalem; not many Christians are weeping over New York, Chicago or Detroit. He looked out over the multitude and was moved with compassion. We, His twentieth century disciples, are prone to look on the multitude with derision, sometimes with contempt, often with a kind of a blasé indifference. Jesus detected the faintest flicker of faith in some poor outcast and observed it with joy; we are often scornful of those of feeble faith, and inclined to doubt their sincerity and deem them doomed to failure.

Jesus' other sheep are everywhere, and among all peoples and all ranks of society. These He must bring and He must bring them through His disciples; unless they are brought that way they may not come at all. Given a follower of Christ who has caught the great vision and bears the love of God in his heart for all peoples, who cannot rest until he has done all he can to make these people know the new life in Jesus Christ, and such a person plus the Divine Spirit becomes immeasurably a power for God and man.

"AND THEY SHALL BECOME ONE FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD"

It is worth remarking that the Revised Version translates not "one fold" but "one flock." Why the change? Professor Alfred Plummer, the distinguished English scholar, says of this change: "Few corrections made in the Revised Version are more important than this. The mistake originated in Jerome's translation, where we have the same Latin word to represent two different Greek words. Wyclif followed him; and, although Tyndale and Coverdale corrected the error, the Authorized Version unfortunately followed Wyclif. Christ says nothing about there being one fold, which would imply uniformity: what He promises, and encourages us to work for and to pray for, is "one flock," in which there may be large measures of diversity along with the essential unity belonging to one and the same Shepherd.

> "It is impossible to estimate the mischief that has been done by this unhappy substitution of 'fold' for 'flock' in this important text. Throughout the Middle Ages, few people in Western Europe knew Greek, and Jerome's Vulgate led them to believe that Christ had used the word 'fold' in both places, and that He had inculcated a doctrine, which the change of word was perhaps intended to exclude. The doctrine, that the sheep not in the fold must be brought in until there is one fold, with all the sheep penned within it, gave immense support to the claims of the Roman Catholic Church to be the one

church, outside which there is no salvation. What Christ says is that those outside the then existing fold, equally with those who were in the fold, shall become one flock, of which He is the Shepherd. Christ had come to break down 'the wall of partition' between the Jewish Church and the Gentiles. In the gospel, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was to cease, and the salvation which had been offered first to the Jew, became the common inheritance of all."

For hundreds of years divisions among Christians has been a thing of scandal. In England there are about two hundred and eighty kinds of Christians; in America around one hundred and fifty. There are seventeen branches of the Methodist family, twenty-two of the Lutherans, eight of the Catholic, thirteen of the Baptist, twelve of the Presbyterian and six of the Adventist. The effect of such divisions upon the mind of the people is at its best confusing, and at its worst demoralizing. The first great stride toward the reunion of Christendom is a united Protestantism. The Evangelical churches have much in common. Their agreements are vastly more than their differences. Protestantism is virtually one in its conception of God and of its revelation in Jesus Christ; in the power and reign of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the leaders; in the nature and mission of the church; in the place and potency of the Holy Scripture; in the necessity of the new birth and the power of an endless life. The things that divide Protestantism are the lesser and unimportant matters. For the greater part

they are accretions of human devise, nonessential and divisive. Too long have the differences among Protestants been magnified .and the agreements minimized. The hour is fully here to reverse this order, to minimize the differences .and magnify the agreements.

Protestantism has something to learn from Catholicism. Among Catholics there is little duplication of churches, no overlapping of work, no competition between the churches. In Protestantism there is a serious duplication, frequent competition and much overlapping,—the result is a waste of energy, a duplication of activity, and misuse of vast sums of money.

It was my pleasure once to preach in a union meeting in a community where the churches are strong and vigorous. Four congregations united and for two weeks we were one flock, and one shepherd. Protestantism was united in that community. Methodists, United Brethren, Presbyterians, and Disciples entered into blessed oneness of worship and interest. On the last Sunday afternoon of the meetings all united in an observance of the Lord's Supper. It was impressive, inspiring, and unific. The comment of a gentleman of a religious body other than my own is interesting. Said he, "I've been thinking that if it is possible for our four churches to be united for two weeks like this, it is possible—if not now, some day—to be united in this close way all the time." And this is what many are thinking these days. But we will not be able to make this great stride toward a united Protestantism until we manifest the spirit and view of Jesus in this passage, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." Conscientious seekers after God in

this and other lands, whatever may be their degree of enlightenment or denominational barriers, are included in this Godlike affirmation.

Soon shall the slumbering Morn awake
From wandering Stars of Error freed,
When Christ the Bread of heaven shall break
For saints that own a common creed.

The walls that fence his flock apart
Shall crack and crumble in decay,
And every tongue and every heart
Shall welcome in the new born day.

Then shall his glorious church rejoice
His word of promise to recall—
One sheltering fold, one Shepherd's voice,
One God and Father over all!

Let us hope and pray that the poet's dream may be realized, that the Master's prayer be answered—and more; let us devote ourselves to this unfinished program of Jesus with a zeal that shall amount to a holy passion.

XV

WHEN DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP

A Never-To-Be-Forgotten Day in the Lives of Four Fishermen

Luke 5:1-11.

Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon Him and heard the word of God, that He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat. And when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answered and said: Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at Thy word I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed Him.

XV

WHEN DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP

It was a never-to-be-forgotten day in the lives of four fishermen. The scene is the shore of the Sea of Galilee in the early morning. Two boats are drawn up on the beach, and nearby the fisher-folk are busy washing their nets. All night they have toiled, and not a single fish did they catch. Now it is morning, and all that the men have to show for their night's work are the empty and bedraggled nets, their weary bodies and heavy eyelids.

Does such a scene have any particular meaning for us? Have we anything in common with those fishermen on the shores of Galilee that morning nineteen centuries ago? I venture to say, much in every way. The incident is eloquent with the token that failure may result, despite our best efforts; that patience, industry and skill do not and cannot invariably bring success. Those Galilean fishermen were not amateurs; they knew that the night was the best time for fishing; they were familiar with the parts of the lake where fish were most likely to be; they knew how to cast their nets skillfully and draw in their catch warily. Yet withal, their night's toil had been in vain.

Thus it is with men and women everywhere, and quite apart from degree of culture, rank or possession.

We are of the same clay as those Galilean fishermen. We too must know what it is to invest our all and apparently fail. Toil, patience, skill, we freely give, and apparently without results. It is the lot of the teacher, the parent, the merchant, the tradesman, the farmer, to met the baffling fact that futility sometimes rewards their best laid plans. It is indeed this very experience that tests the metal of manhood and runs a dividing line between the faint-hearted and the dauntless.

JESUS CONVERTS SIMON'S BOAT INTO A PULPIT

Thus it happened that while the fishermen were washing their nets, Jesus, accompanied by a throng, came that way. Much of His ministry was along the shores of Galilee, and a goodly part of it took place on that famed little lake. As usual the people clamored to hear Him, the throng pressed Him sorely. To escape the crush, He stepped into Simon Peter's boat, and having asked that the owner push out a little way from the land, sat down in the boat, and from that pulpit taught the people. When one gets thus far into the narrative he comes face to face with the great law of Christian service namely—The stewardship of life. Whatever we yield to God, He will use, whether it be small or great. Whatever we withhold from Him, however vast in potentialities, God cannot use. Our usefulness depends then, not upon what we possess, but what we surrender to the Christ of our souls.

There is no dearth of talented people in the world; brilliant folks are plentiful; but there is a woeful lack

of men and women who have laid their all, much or little, upon the high altar of service. Was it not Mr. Moody, who when criticized by a cultured gentleman for his ungrammatical English, pointedly retorted: "Very well, what definite Christian use are you making of your faultless diction?" Precisely that is the test for us, everyone. Not what we have, but what use we make of our attainments;—that is the question. A house, an automobile, a good singing voice, a talent for public speaking, an interesting and entertaining way with children, an engaging and influential personality—all of these dedicated to Christian ideals and the progress of the Kingdom of God will yield abundant fruits, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. Jesus used Peter's boat, and His Spirit today will employ with uncommon fruitfulness, every possession, every talent yielded unto Him. Blessed is he who, perceiving the Divine presence, exclaims: "Take! Fill! Use!"

> There are strange ways of serving God;
> You sweep a room or turn a sod,
> And suddenly, to your surprise,
> You hear the whirr of seraphim
> And find you're under God's own eyes
> And building palaces for Him.

DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP

The teaching at an end, Jesus turns to Simon Peter. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught," he commands. How splendid the spirit; how stimulating the force of the words,—"Put out into the deep." There is a tang in the thought. Let us be honest; we are prone to hug the shore. We

prefer the "safety-first" method. We like much to dilly-dally amidst the shallows and the shoals. Especially are we so minded after one experience on the deep where naught but failure was our lot. Ah, we know, we know! We undertook with fear and trembling an enterprise that called for courage and persistence. We failed, and with that failure our ardor was completely cooled. We agreed, for instance, to take a class of young men and instruct them in the Holy Scriptures. It was a big undertaking, but we plunged in and struggled bravely. We gave what we believed to be our best and we failed. We could not interest the young men. We seemed unable to grapple with the big problem. We felt powerless in our defeat. We came away from that failure with our minds fully made up. We said to ourselves—and at the time we meant it—"Never again will we undertake anything of that kind." We preferred the shallows rather than the deep. We chose the shore with which we were fairly familiar, rather than the great deep which we did not know; and then right on the heels of such a resolution came the challenge to continue with that group of young men and to give ourselves with renewed vigor to the mastery of the undertaking. "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." Risky? Certainly. Dangerous? Possibly so; but likewise rich in possibilities. There is nothing to be caught along the shore, but far out in the deep the prizes of life are awaiting the coming of the venturesome and the brave.

God is constantly calling us to put out into the deep, and this call to our souls is as deep calling unto deep.

Here are the Holy Scriptures. When it comes to constant and diligent study of their great contents, for the greater part we have not put out into the deep. Our knowledge of the Bible is small and largely surface. It is the Book everybody praises and few read. We can quote John 14: 1–6, Romans 8: 28, the twenty-third Psalm, and the Beatitudes; but there are mountain peaks we have not ascended, and great unexplored areas of Scriptural truth. We need to put out into the deep of these old and time-tested writings. God challenges us to search the Scriptures diligently; to read whole books at a single sitting; to compare Scripture with Scripture; to commit many a passage to memory. Most of us believe in prayer, but only a few are acquainted with the real heart of communion with the Heavenly Father. We have been accustomed to "say prayers" and to pray occasionally when the need seemed to be especially urgent; but only here and there are those who are able to say with Jacob in the intensity of his struggle with the mysterious wrestler, "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me." Oh! we are all under the domination of the shore and the shallows, where it is smooth sailing and commonplace. Put out, O! slow of heart, and sluggish of spirit; put out, where the waters are of unplumbed depth, "too full for sound or foam!"

CHRIST THE COMMANDER

Simon Peter's answer is wistful, and it is also the soul of loyalty. "Master," he replied, "we toiled all night and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net." Now, there is vastly more in these

words than a careless reader will see. Simon Peter was a fisherman and a sailor; Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter and a landsman. If there is one thing above all others that a sailor holds in contempt, it is the ignorance of the average landsman of the sea and the things that pertain to sea-faring life. What does a landsman know about a "spar," the "capstan," the "halyards," or the various "masts" and "riggings"? What is the difference between a "barque" and a "schooner," a "brig" and a "brigantine"? Which side is "starboard" and which "port"? How little a landsman knows the vocabulary of the sailor. Simon Peter and his seasoned fellow fishermen ought to know better than a carpenter, the best time and places for fishing. And yet this Galilean with whom the fisherman had only a slight acquaintance up to this time, presumes to give orders, and to take command of that fishing boat. "Put out into the deep, Simon, and let down your nets for a draught." Such is the order, and a landsman gives it. What audacity. Will Captain Simon obey the order? It is a trying ordeal; it is a severe test. The fisherman answers, and his reply is, all things considered, surprising. For one thing it is full of humility; for another, of obedient faith. "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing; but at Thy word we will let down the nets." It should be observed that the word "Master" here is not the same word usually translated "Rabbi" or "Teacher." This word is peculiar to Luke, and means "Commander," "Arranger," or "Director." Thus it comes to pass that Simon Peter, Captain of his fishing smack, retires

from command, so to speak, and receives orders from Jesus, the carpenter.

> Thou hast not measured strength as we
> Sea-faring men that toil. And yet—
> Once more, once more at Thy strange word,
> Master, we will let down the net!

"At Thy word I will let down the nets." Aye! that was a noteworthy answer, and it rebukes us of today, who are loath to acknowledge fully the Pilot of our lives, recognizes His authority, and accept His command. If we but took Jesus at His word, what different persons we would be; power would supplant weakness, love subdue hate, and our days become dynamic for good beyond computation. Simon accepts orders from his new Captain, and lo! the memorable issue thereof. Back again goes the little boat to the deep places, perhaps the very water where the four had toiled all night without success, and there Simon and his partner let down the nets. What is the use? Nothing will come of it. Why waste the time? Yes,—but wait; the nets are heavy as lead; pull away. What have we here? Why, so great a catch that the nets are on the point of breaking, and it becomes necessary to call the men in the other boat to help haul in the multitude of fishes. The haul is so great that the little craft is in peril of sinking. See the astonishment of the fishermen. Look at their faces. Observe the amazement and the awe! Oh! it is a wonderful catch, and when Simon Peter sees the great number of fishes, he falls down at Jesus' knees saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter did not want Jesus to go. He did not mean just what he said, save

with regard to his sins. It was like him though to say what he did; it was an impulsive speech, but Jesus understood it perfectly. James and John, partners with Simon,—and probably Andrew, though he is not named,—were likewise amazed and impressed, and of a right they should have been. Here in their very midst was One who spake with authority, and whose personality was radiant, and in whom were new and surprising forces for good. Here was One who could bring success from failure and turn darkness into light. Surely it was worth much even to be with Jesus. Yea, it was worth giving up all to follow such a Leader, so able a Captain.

THE FOUR CALLED TO A NEW CAREER

There is that fishing boat piled with fishes such as possibly no other night of toil had ever won. Simon Peter and his partners received and accepted their new life call. "Jesus said unto Simon, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Now this prediction of Jesus is a flash-light upon the Christian career. Observe the phrase closely. *Men* and *fish* are contrasted. Here is the great catch of fish, and while the fishermen are marveling over it, Jesus tells them that their greatest success is to be as catchers of men. But the meaning of the Greek word throws still further light on their future career. Literally, the sentence is —"Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt *take alive.*" Is not the picture vivid? There are the multitudes of fish; you see them flopping about,—a great pile of squirming, wriggling fish; but even as you look, already life is beginning to leave their bodies and they are less

active than when you first looked. In a little while death will have stilled them everyone. They were caught to *die*. And thus Jesus tells the wondering fishermen—"Henceforth you shall take alive." That is to say, "you will win men and women, and save them to that life which is life indeed—the super-abundant life." And surely the fishermen perceived some hint of the deep meaning in Jesus' words, for when they had brought the boat to land, they left all and followed Him. An accomplished student of the Gospels holds that there were three stages in the discipleship of the men that Jesus called to be with Him. First, as simple believers in Him as the Christ and His occasional companion; second, the abandonment of secular occupations and a constant attendance on His person; third, when called especially to be Apostles. This incident marks the second stage of the calling of the four fishermen to be followers of Jesus Christ. They leave their nets, their boats, their all, and follow Him. The love of the lake, the habits of years cannot hold them back. The fishermen are now Apostles in the making.

We have in these eleven verses of the fifth chapter of Luke a picturesque account of Jesus among the every-day things of life. There amidst the nets and the boats and the familiar occupations, the Son of God gave a new meaning, and imparted a new power to the lives of four fishermen. Thus it is that spiritual power is accessible whilst we are busy with the every day affairs of life,—the farmer in the field, the woman in the kitchen, the blacksmith in his shop, the merchant behind the counter, the conductor on the train. Thus

it is that God visits us here and now to turn defeat into victory, to scatter darkness with light, and to overcome evil with good. Deep calleth unto deep at this very hour. God's spirit speaks to our spirit, rebukes our surface thinking and our surface living, and through Christ He calls upon us to "put out into the deep." Have we not tarried long enough on the beach and by the shore? Are we not done with the shallow waters, where to be safe is to be useless? Is it not high time for us to acknowledge the new Captain and bid Him command our lives, even as He commanded Peter's sailing vessel that memorable day on Galilee? Yea, and more, bid Him pilot us "over life's tempestuous sea."

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild, restless sea,
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, "Christian follow me."

As of old, Apostles heard it
By the Galilean lake,
Turned from home and toil and kindred
Leaving all for His dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
Of the vain world's golden store,
From each idol that would keep us,
Saying, "Christian, love me more."

XVI

WHAT AND WHERE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Ministry of the Comforter or "God in Action"

John 14:16.

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you forever.

John 15:26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of me.

John 16:7.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you.

XVI

WHAT AND WHERE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Is there any other Biblical term more misunderstood than the phrase "The Holy Spirit"? What or who is the Holy Spirit? How define, explain or describe the Holy Spirit? A great many devout Christians are uncertain as to the nature and ministration of the Holy Spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, that the man in the street is perplexed by the term. Moreover, a great deal has been written of a speculative character pertaining to this subject. Arbitrary distinctions have been made; mystical meanings discovered, and the result has been the darkening rather than the clarifying of the theme. I venture to say that any attempt to distinguish between "The Spirit of God," "The Spirit of Christ," and "The Holy Spirit" is unwarranted and confusing in the extreme. The three phrases are in essence one; they are of God; they may be used interchangeably or synonymously. In this study a threefold consideration of the "Comforter" is proposed: first, the meaning of the Comforter; second, the transforming power of the Comforter; and third, the conditions under which the Comforter was sent.

I

The word translated "Comforter" is the Greek "Paraclete." But this new and unusual word means

little to the average reader of the New Testament. In the margin of the Revised Version are found two other words which aid us to understand who the Comforter is and what He does. An examination of these marginal renderings may be profitable.

"Comforter" may be translated "Advocate." An advocate is one who speaks for another and presents the merits of his case in the most favorable light possible. The word is pictorial, it suggests a courtroom scene and an able advocate impressively arguing or pleading for his client. There may have been some famous advocates, men so eloquent, so persuasive, with such a comprehensive knowledge of the law that merely to put one's case in such good hands meant freedom from anxiety. Think what it must have meant to secure the talents of such advocates as William F. Evarts, Rufus Choate or Daniel Webster. The Comforter of the Holy Spirit is an "Advocate." Advocate for whom? For us or for God? In a sense for both. On the one hand bearing witness of Him to us; on the other bearing witness of us to Him. So Jesus in leaving His disciples promised them the presence of the "Advocate." And there is in the word a wealth of suggestion.

The second word in the margin translating "Paraclete" is the familiar word "helper." Thus Jesus spoke to His disciples—"If I go not away the Helper will not come." Here is a word that everybody understands. In many of the well-known trades a full-fledged journeyman is assisted by an apprentice who is called a "helper." That helper serves his fellow craftsman in many capacities. The Holy Spirit, the

Spirit of God, Christ's Spirit, is our helper, ready and willing to help us in matters great or small. There are some specific ways in which the Spirit helps the follower of the Christ. These ways are set forth in the Scripture. He is, for instance, a "teacher." When the Great Teacher was parted from His disciples, when He left this world in physical presence, He sent His Spirit to teach us. We may learn of Him many things; be instructed of Him in the deepest subjects, even though we cannot sit at the feet of Jesus as did Mary in the home at Bethany. The Spirit is also a "Guide." And what blessed help Divine guidance is in a world where the way is dark and doubtful. The Holy Spirit is our unfailing guide. Still again; the Holy Spirit bears witness and testifies, that is to say, He confirms and substantiates spiritual truth. Certainly this word "Helper" is aptly applied to the Spirit of God which teaches, guides, and bears witness. The Spirit also convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. This is work of the Holy Spirit among those who are of the "world." And even in this capacity the term "helper" is most appropriate.

Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

In addition to the words "Advocate" and "Helper" there is a third which translates "Comforter" quite accurately; a term, too, which has come to have through the World War a very large place in popular favor. This term is "Ally." The Holy Spirit that Christ imparts is our ally; Divinity-fighting for us and with us. It is the knowledge of this ally that enables many an apparently hard-pressed and all but defeated

man to say, "They that be with me are more than they that be against me." There was a ballad much sung during the last months of the great war which describes a blind French soldier sitting by the window of his own home, his little son by his side. They heard the sound of martial music and of tramping men. The blind French soldier requested the little boy to tell him what division of soldiery was passing by. The boy looked out of the window and was mystified by the sight of strange khaki-clad men bearing a flag that was new to him. When he reported what he saw to his father, the blind Frenchman became greatly excited. Breathlessly he asked the boy if there were white stars on a blue field in the flag; he asked him if there were broad stripes of red and white. The little fellow answered "yes," and the blind soldier leaped to his feet exclaiming—"They have come! The Americans have come! France and the cause of liberty is saved. Our great ally is here!" So may we think of this Spirit of God and Christ, the Holy Spirit, not only as a Comforter, as Teacher, as Guide, as Revealer, as Advocate and Helper, but as our great Ally—Almighty God, Himself. Our Great Ally is here!

II

The coming of the Comforter brought a transforming power into the lives of the followers of Jesus. Symbolically He bestowed the Spirit upon His disciples when after His resurrection He appeared among them in the upper room in Jerusalem. Then, "He breathed upon His disciples and sayeth unto them,—receive ye the Holy Spirit." Actually and in power the Spirit

came on the day of Pentecost following His resurrection, came according to His promise; and with the coming of the Comforter, the Advocate, the Helper, the Ally, the Church was born. Observe the amazing difference the coming of the Spirit made in the lives of that little group of disciples. At the time of their Master's arrest they all forsook Him and fled. In the court of the High Priest, Simon Peter weakened and lost his courage in the presence of a saucy maid who twitted him with being a follower of the Nazarene. After His crucifixion that little group came together again, but they came in fear; they met in secrecy and behind locked doors. His followers were like sheep without a shepherd, they were broken in spirit and apparently all power had gone from their lives. The Comforter came. The Advocate arrived. The great Ally emerged. The Helper was at hand. The Spirit entered into the lives of men who had been cowardly, and made them bold as lions. Peter, who had denied his Lord, became the spokesman on that memorable day of Pentecost. His words were full of fire. He spoke with authority and was unafraid. In the presence of a great multitude he charged them with having crucified Jesus who had become both Lord and Christ. A little while later Peter and John, having been arrested, were brought in chains before the Jewish Council and threatened by that august body not to teach or preach any more in the name of Jesus. How magnificently those two disciples answered that threat. "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard."

Stephen, in the presence of the High Priest and the members of the high council on trial for his very life, spoke with the same utter disregard of his own fortunes, and with a boldness that cannot be explained except by the presence of the Comforter which was with him in power and might. Then when sentence of death had been passed upon Stephen and they took him out of the City and stoned him, he died with a prayer on his lips—a prayer of forgiveness for those who did the stoning and with his face aglow with the glory of God.

The history of the Apostolic Church is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Advocate, the Helper, the Ally. The book of Acts thrills with this infilling of the Divine Spirit in the lives of the followers of Christ. The letters of Paul glow with the same light. No wonder D. L. Moody said, "The Holy Spirit is God at work." Another eminent Christian and a great scholar said, "The Holy Spirit is God in action." Wherever a great Christian man or woman lives, it will be found that the reason for their potent and fruitful activity is because something is added to their personalities and that something is the Spirit of God. "I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me," cried Paul. Paul plus the Holy Spirit accounts for his career of incredible zeal.

The history of the Foreign Missionary enterprise affords another illustration of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We are tempted here at home to find substitutes for the Spirit, it is not so with our fellow-workers in the waste places of the earth. They are Spirit-filled and Spirit-led; there is a power and

poise in their lives which, with few exceptions, make them a marked and set apart group of workers for the Lord. When Henry M. Stanley found David Livingstone after many months of search, he found him in the very heart of the wildest section of Africa, a broken man physically, but spiritually full of fire and with faith unshaken. Stanley urged him to return to the comfort and ease of civilization and the great popular acclaim that awaited him in England. It was a tremendous temptation, but Livingstone arose superior to it. He would not leave his post of duty. Stanley could not understand it at the time, but as he reflected upon the matter it became increasingly clear. Livingstone plus the Holy Spirit, plus Christ, plus God—that is the explanation.

III

The coming of the Comforter was conditioned upon Jesus' going away. "It is expedient for you," He said, "That I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." The blessing of the absent Christ was the coming of the Spirit. At the time, the disciples could not understand how by the deprivation of Jesus' physical presence there would come still greater blessing through His spiritual presence. In that upper room the thought of Jesus' going away held only pain for His friends and followers, but they were soon to learn that it was only through His going that the greater gain could come. Up to this time the disciples were dependent upon the physical presence of their Lord in order to serve Him best, but they were to do the "greater works" under the spell of His Spirit,

not His physical presence. In His physical presence He was with them; by the coming of the Comforter, —the Spirit of Truth—He was *in* them. Says Bishop Brent: "The presence of the Paraclete took the place of the localized Christ not as a bare substitute but as that which constitutes a superior presence, including all that is held formerly and adding greatness to greatness, riches to wealth. In going Christ came in a fulness which was wanting before He went, the fulness of added availability, a higher degree of presence."

How easy it is for us to place our dependence upon the physical, that which we can see, touch, and hear or taste. How difficult for us to trust the Spirit unseen and intangible. It does not come easy to say and believe it: "For we look not at the things which are seen but at the things that are unseen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The Apostle learned that truth in the school of the Comforter. By the withdrawal of Jesus' physical presence there came the unspeakable gift of the Comforter, Advocate, Helper and Ally, never absent, ever ready to bless, to heal, to guide.

In this fact that it was expedient for Christ to go away that the greater blessing might come, is there not a principle admitting of wide application? Is it expedient that these apparent losses should come to us in order that the greater gain may take their place? Take the solemn matter of death, and the separation from us of those we love and upon whose support we lean. The anguish of separation is often too deep even for tears. And yet, to those who hold the faith of Jesus Christ, by that very experience new avenues

of power have been opened, and if the world of sense and sound becomes less absorbing the world of Spirit becomes more real. Absent in body, present in the spirit, those dear ones seem closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.

Was it expedient that our loved ones left us in the flesh, that we should know them the more intimately in the realm of the Spirit? Was it expedient that we should lose their physical fellowship that we might gain their spiritual companionship? In what seemed all loss, is there not all gain? Is there not a higher spiritualism than that which attempts to establish communication with the dead, a faith which knows, realizes and rejoices in a spiritual communion with those who have gone from us? I do not attempt to answer these questions. I raise them and leave them unanswered. There are depths here which we have not fathomed; there are heights here yet unscaled; vast areas not yet explored. Jesus brought to the world a new release of spiritual power by means of the withdrawal of His physical presence. Beware lest we think or speak of our Lord as though He were "an absentee Christ." Jesus is *here*. He is here in spiritual power. Here in the person of the Comforter, the Advocate, Helper and Ally. To quote the words of a great modern Christian: "He is nearer to us, not farther, than He was to those fishermen in Galilee, but we seem slower to forsake our boats and nets than they were. He means us, through His all-embracing, all-reconciling presence, to do greater works than ever He did as an individual there; not to spend our time and energy in arguing about those less great works of His, whether and how

they were done." We need not pray for the Comforter to come. He has come! We need not plead for the sending of the Spirit. He is here! We have but to receive Him, be filled with Him and be led by Him.

No distant Lord have I, longing afar to be;
Made flesh for me He cannot rest until He rests in me.
Broken in joy and pain, bone of my bone is He;
Now intimacy clearer still, He dwells himself in me.
I need not journey for this dearest friend to see,
Companionship is always mine, He makes His home with me.

XVII

THE CHRISTMAS LYRIC

A Hymn of the Nativity set to Music by The Holy Spirit?

Luke 2:8-20.

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

> Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace among men
> in whom He is well pleased.

And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

XVII

THE CHRISTMAS LYRIC

So interwrought are some compositions with certain impressive occasions or illustrious names that it is quite impossible to think of one and not the other. One seldom hears, for instance, the stately measures of the famous march in *Lohengrin* without thinking of a wedding, particularly a church wedding. The stirring hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" suggests the name of Martin Luther. Thomas Knox's "Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?" serves to recall the life of Abraham Lincoln, whose favorite poem it was. Comes Christmas—and the one passage of Scripture that the occasion invariably selects is Saint Luke's story of the birth of Jesus. Last night in many a home this story was read to children just before they said "Our Father Who Art in Heaven" or "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep." In tens of thousands of Churches this morning this Scripture will be read and made the basis of innumerable sermons.

Comment upon so flawless a production seems superfluous until one remembers that it is possible to praise this narrative extravagantly and at the same time not relate it in any practical way to present day affairs or personal life. This is a peril always present, a tendency everywhere observable. Today, with tokens of

the Christmas event on every hand and this place still vibrant with the melody of "Silent Night," we can do nothing better than to reflect on this Christmas lyric, for such it is—a hymn set to music by the Holy Spirit.

The poetry of this passage is exquisitely fine. Could anything of the kind be lovelier or more simply told than the birth of Jesus as chronicled by "the beloved physician." Here is an event—the most momentous of all history, yet in its telling there is no embellishment nor any tendency to lengthen out detail. The entire twenty verses tucked away in a corner of a modern newspaper would attract little attention and might easily be overlooked. In twelve sentences the world's greatest love story is told; the birth of humanity's most colossal Figure described.

The scene here described is pastoral, and the locality already famed in Biblical lore. Over these same hills, hundreds of years before, David had tended his father's flock and fought successfully the lion and bear that attacked the sheep. Years later the Shepherd King, familiar with both the sweets and the bitterness of renown, musing on his boyhood days, commemorated them in that Psalm of Psalms—the Psalm of the Shepherd's crook, of green pastures and still waters. On these identical hills, to the shepherds abiding in the fields and keeping watch over their flock, the Good News came. Jesus' life was curiously linked with shepherds and the shepherding ministry. He called Himself the Good Shepherd, spoke of His disciples as His flock, and said that He had "other sheep" not of the recognized fold.

Why were shepherds so signally honored as to be

the first to hear the good tidings? Why was not this stupendous event communicated first to a group of learned Rabbis or others of the wise, the renowned, and the great? Is God a respecter of persons? Was this high honor reserved for peasants just because they were poor? Was this distinction withheld from the learned, the great, the rich, just because they were learned, and great, and rich? I think not. There is, to be sure, a fitness in the fact that the first heralding of Jesus' coming should have been to the humble and the lowly. The great majority of the peoples of earth are poor and their lives a battle for bread and for shelter almost from the cradle to the grave. Even so, we may believe that this was not the chief reason that shepherds were the first to learn of the Saviour's birth. Rather was it not because they were best fitted spiritually to receive the great Word? Edersheim, learned author of one of the best known "Lives of Christ" says that the flocks of sheep watched and tended in the vicinity of Jerusalem were for sacrifice in the Temple and that their guardians were not ordinary shepherds. Whether he is correct or not, we cannot be far wrong in assuming that the watchers of the flock that night of nights possessed a certain preparation of mind and affections to receive the Revelation. The learned, the famous, the exalted of that day, as possibly of all other days, were troubled about many things. Their lives were already full and, after the manner of the Inn at Bethlehem, they had no room for the Great Gift.

So it came about that the Great Light shone upon the shepherds as they kept watch by night over the

sheep. An angel of the Lord stood by them and proclaimed the good tidings of great joy; then others of the celestial band appeared, and they praised God, saying—"Glory to God in the Highest." Angels! How the word revives memories that bless and burn. Angels! Messengers of Almighty God; visitants from a better order of society than this world of sin and death. Angels! Blessed belief that God has His messengers of mercy, His heralds of hope, His personal representatives who can go anywhere, at any time, under any conditions. Angels! The word vivifies my remembrance of a little girl, nearing the boundaries of the unseen and struggling for life; her speech no longer coherent, but on her lips, clear and distinct, one word was repeated over and over again—"Angels," "Angels," "Angels." Oh, the exquisite poetry, the lovely language, the unending glory of this Christ Lyric of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

It was not a mere contingency that the birth of Jesus should be inseparably linked with peace among men. Peace on earth is the note exultant in this lyric of Christmas. The New Testament is a Book of peace, not of battles; a book that pronounces a blessing upon the peace-makers and promises they shall be called the children of God. Between the peace spirit and ideals of the Gospels and the history of nineteen centuries called Christian, there is something incongruous, discordant and discouraging. Save for brief seasons and in restricted areas, Peace on Earth has not yet prevailed. Christendom has much to her stock of credit—much that is glorious and monumental, but Christendom has yet to know the victory of peace on earth. No

sadder spectacle has the world beheld than that of the followers of the Prince of Peace hacking each other down with the sword, assailing each other with gasses that scorch and shrivel the lungs, blasting each other to bits with bombs, drowning each other at sea by the wholesale, hymning hate against each other to the bitter end.

Peace on earth depends upon good will between men. As long as hate reigns in the human heart, as long as covetousness crowds out the spirit of brotherliness, as long as jealousy and envy hold their sway over mankind, so long will wars endure. Mere limitation of armament is not enough—that of itself would be only a makeshift if the causes that produce war are not abolished. Destroy every battleship, scrap every submarine, wreck every bombing plane, muster out the soldiery now in ranks—do all this, but make no intelligent and consistent effort to create a new heart in man or open up a new outlet for his enthusiasms and ambitions, and some kind of war enginery, like the harvest of that famed crop of dragon teeth, will spring up over night.

There are reasons for rejoicing this morning because world peace is a little nearer than it was a year ago; some progress has been made in the conference on Limitation of Armaments at Washington. More people are thinking peace today than ever before. The voice of the people in solemn protest is being heard in the councils of the nations with a new insistence; but make no mistake, the Millennium is not at hand. The voice of the profiteer, the militarist, the granite-hearted materialist who walks by sight and not by faith—their

voices are still potent in behalf of armaments and a continuance of the old order. Not only so, but the motives for world peace must be deeper than for mere economic reasons if peace on earth endure.

If Disarmament is desired chiefly because it would reduce taxes and produce a revival of business, we may believe that army and naval disarmament might come to pass, and we should have in its stead a commercial and industrial armament as deadly and as difficult to conquer as the old and familiar kind. Peace on Earth —well it simply cannot come until there is good will among men. Good will among men is retarded by racial pride, handicapped by commercial jealousies, hindered by biased partisanship, crippled and hamstrung by a mean and narrow sectarianism. The core of Jesus' teaching is the supremacy of love and of sacrifice, the ministry of service and of mercy, the mighti ness of right and justice. If we are to have peace among men, men must know the peace which is Christ's. His peace was an inward experience before it became an outward manifestation. His peace was a result of obedience to the laws of the Spirit. He walked in full fellowship with the Father because from a child He learned obedience. It is possible for society to keep the laws in a formal way and still bend and break the laws of love and remain anarchists in the realm of the Spiritual. There will never be peace on earth until that Gospel of good will which Jesus taught be mediated through the lives of those who accept His teaching, and narrow nationalism, racial hostilities and sectarian bigotry give way to a Christian commonwealth —worldwide in its scope.

In the very center of this matchless story is the Child; the chief actor in this world drama is the Babe at Bethlehem. The shepherds, the angels, the manger, the star—these are all incidental. Christianity began with a child, and no teaching of Jesus is more fundamental than when He said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." What gesture of Jesus was of more consequence than when, having been asked by His disciples who should be regarded as the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, He called to Him a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said: "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Childhood has been wronged terribly, and the rights of the child have been as flagrantly disregarded as the rights of womanhood. Babies have not always counted for much; there are places still where they count for little. There are corners of the earth where the Gospel has not yet come where babies, especially girl babies, are slain ruthlessly and in great numbers; places where a puny or deformed baby is quickly put out of the way. There are plague spots of so-called Christian countries where babies are not born, but damned into the world, with scarcely a chance to live, to love and be loved. It was the Christ Himself who declared that it was not God's will that His little ones should perish. It is often man's will that the little one suffer and die so young. Sometimes this is due to ignorance, sometimes to a perverse heart and a wrong conception of what Christianity is.

Yes, a baby is in the center and at the very heart of

this lyric of Saint Luke's Gospel. God's greatest Gift to the world came as a child—a helpless babe, born amidst poverty and off to one side of the highways of the world. Theodore Parker once said that a baby is better for the heart than a whole academy of philosophers, and of course he was right. A young missionary madonna, after bending over her first-born, wrote to friends at home—"I had no idea being a mother was so wonderful." The advent of a child in a home is always occasion for wonderment, a never-ceasing miracle, and to the seeing eye every mother's man child is haloed with a glory that only the mother-heart may know. Wordsworth was never more seer-like than when he wrote

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

And there are other lines in the same noble ode that have been praised much, but not too much—

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us our life's star—
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar,
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home.

There is a something in the touch of the hand of a little child more enchanting than that of a fairy's wand. I can understand how the hard heart of the leading character in a famous story melted utterly when he felt a child's soft cheek against his, and the tiny fingers on his neck and behind his ears and in his hair.

Then the trustfulness and the affection and the faith of a little child: what is there in all the world so irresistible?

Well do I remember arriving in the Union Station at St. Louis on a blustery winter night some years ago, and alighting from the car with me was a young mother and her baby, a beautiful child, possibly a year old. She was heavily burdened with baggage, and I offered to carry the child for her. She was a real mother, for she took a good look at me—a searching look—and then she handed the baby over to me. She expected to be met by some of her kinspeople in the station, so she informed me, but no one appeared, and after we had waited and looked about for some little time she said, "Would you mind keeping baby while I call up my relatives here?" Time was when such a request would have set me quaking and filled me with a nameless sort of fear, but that time was a good ways in the past. Only five hours before I had said good-by to my own frisky five. So I kept baby, and his mother disappeared in the direction of a telephone booth. She was gone a good ten minutes, and during her absence I paced up and down the long waiting room, holding the little fellow snug in my arms. He was a dear; he was content; he trusted me perfectly. He rested his velvety cheek against mine and gazed at me out of his big blue eyes as one who had absolute faith, never doubting but that even a stranger would protect him from the smallest harm. His little soft hand stole around my neck and rested there ever so lightly. I thought of the lines:

Softer it seemed than the softest down
On the breast of the gentlest dove
And its timid press and its sweet caress
Were strong in the strength of love.

By and by and his mother returned. I helped her and her young son into a taxi and said good-night, and the little stranger vanished out of my life as quickly as he came into it, but he left a memory tender and precious.

God hath joined together the cradle and Christmas. Christianity has coronated childhood. God gives us children, but the molding of them for better or for worse—that ministry is our own. Christ put the child in our midst, but society has for a greater part set him to one side—neglected, slighted and wronged him. If we want peace on earth there is a way to get it: train the child in the teachings of Jesus; train him to think peace, not war; rear him in the ideals of brotherhood; teach him the supremacy of service—but to do that successfully the child must have for environment a society that is Christian not only on Sunday but seven days in the week.

Christmas helps us to evaluate the children in our home at their true worth. Surely the blessed birthday of our Lord is a family festival like unto no other. There is a story which inspired a much admired painting called "Content." A Chinese beggar is shown coming in before his king. With the beggar are two small sons. He claims to be penniless; he asks for money. The king promises to give him all that his heart should desire, but there is one condition: the beggar must give in return one half of his visible

wealth. To this he readily agrees for he believes he has no wealth. Then the king mentions in detail his payment, and the first item he calls for is one of the lads. The beggar had not thought of his boys as wealth and he is staggered by the request. In the end, the mendicant goes away from the court with an arm about each boy, content with what he has. The story is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It is costly to rear children and give them a chance in the world. If society were really Christian, beggars would be rare, and rarer still the children of beggars, to be dwarfed, hindered and cursed by poverty's blight.

Christmas in many a home this year cannot but be different from Christmas of a year ago. Oh, what a company of children whose shouts and merry laughter made music a year ago have since gone from us by way of the great pilgrimage of death. How small their feet, and how brave to take that long journey with never a doubt or a fear! Thrice blessed is the truth that the Christmas lyric includes not only poetry, charm and color but comfort as well. He whose birth we commemorate,—He who said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me,"—shall He not bless and comfort the heavy heart in the homes where Christmas today is not the same nor ever can be as it was ere the charmed circle was broken? It was the Christ who said of these little ones, "their angels do always behold the face of my Father Who is in Heaven."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
  Is it really come again?
With its memories and greetings,
  With its joy and with its pain.

There's a minor in the carol,
And a shadow in the light,
And a spray of cypress twining
With the holly-wreath tonight.
And the hush is never broken
By laughter, light and low,
As we listen in the starlight
To the "bells across the snow."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
'Tis not so very long
Since other voices blended
With the carol and the song!
If we could but hear them singing
As they are singing now,
If we could but see the radiance
Of the crown on each dear brow,
There would be no sighs to smother,
No hidden tear to flow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the "bells across the snow."

O Christmas, merry Christmas!
This never more can be;
We cannot bring again the days
Of our unshadowed glee.
But Christmas, happy Christmas,
Sweet herald of goodwill,
With holy songs of glory
Brings holy gladness still.
For peace and hope may brighten,
And patient love may glow,
As we listen in the starlight
To the "bells across the snow."

THE END

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